

Florentino Timbreza(2001). *Alternative to a Dead God*. Manila : De La Salle University Press, Inc.

[Excerpts]

XAVIER UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES



T 58437

# Alternative To A Dead God

**XU** LIBRARY

Florentino T. Timbreza



DE LA SALLE UNIVERSITY PRESS, INC.  
2504 Leon Guinto St., Malate 1004  
Manila, Philippines  
[www.dlsupress.com](http://www.dlsupress.com)

**XU** LIBRARY

58437

530 Great Book Reading  
7/12/07

1060 2 mps

Originally published in 2001 by  
De La Salle University Press, Inc.  
2504 Leon Guinto St., Malate 1004, Manila, Philippines  
Tel. No. (632) 536-1761; Telefax: (632) 526-5139  
E-mail: press@mail.dlsu.edu.ph  
Website: www.dlsupress.com

Copyright © 2001 by Florentino T. Timbreza

#### ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means—whether virtual, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise—without the written permission of the copyright owner.

#### Cataloguing-in-Publication Data

BT Timbreza, Florentino T.  
180 Alternative to a dead God/Florentino Timbreza—Manila:  
.H54 De La Salle University Press, 2001  
T55 xx; 138 p.; cm  
2001

ISBN 9-7155-5349-4

1. Alienation (Theology) 2. Alienation (Philosophy)  
3. Man (Christian theology) 4. Hidden God. I. Title

Basal Text: AGaramond  
Display Type: Helvetica  
Typesetting System: Adobe Pagemaker 6.5  
Paper Stock: Bookpaper #60  
Cover Design: Edwin Peter J. Varona

## Contents

FOREWORD	vii
INTRODUCTION	x
• Filipino Theistic Frames	xi
• Death of the God-Hypothesis	xiv
INTRODUCING ERICH FROMM	xvii
CHAPTER I. The Human Situation and Existential Factcities	
• Man as the Freak of Nature	1
• Man's Thrownness in the World	3
• The Existential Dichotomies in Man	5
• The Inherent Contradiction in Human Existence	6
• The Need for Relatedness and Transcendence	9
• Conclusion	11
CHAPTER II. The Emergence and Nature of Human Alienation	
• Man's Quest for Certainty in Idolatry	12
• Phenomenon of Alienation	14
• Alienation in Relation to Oneself	18
• Alienation in Relationship with Another Person	19
• Alienation in State and Leader Worship	19
• Human Alienation in God Worship	20
• Alienation of Knowledge and in Language	21
• Alienation in Anonymous Authority	22
• Other Forms of Alienation	23
• Man's Loss of Selfhood and Escape from Freedom	27
• The Historically Conditioned Concept of God	30
• God as the Symbol of Man's Power	34
• Fromm's Alternative to God	36
• Conclusion	43

### CHAPTER III. Human Freedom and Historicity

• Man's Struggle for Self-Identity	44
• Fromm's Concept of Freedom	46
• Man as the Maker of History	55
• Man as the Creator of Man	57
• The Messianic Concept of Human Emancipation	61
• Conclusion	66

### CHAPTER IV. Reflective and Critical Evaluation

• Alienation and Man's Search for Grounding	69
• The Dialectical Bond of Human Existence	70
• The Intelligibility of the Real	77
• Commitment to Human Existence in Dialogue with the Absolute Thou	79
• Man's Self-Possession in Relation with God	81
• Fromm's Relevant Role in the Process of De-Hellenization	85
• Conclusion	100

### CHAPTER V. Conclusion

• Existential Decision	103
• Outgrowing Anthropomorphic Concepts	105
• Prisoner of a System	107
• God's Self-Communicating Presence	109
• God-for-Man, Not Against Man	111
• God of Human Liberation	112
• Postscript: Great Revolutionary Leader	114

BIBLIOGRAPHY	117
--------------	-----

INDEX	121
-------	-----

### THE AUTHOR

## Foreword

Religious consciousness is itself historical. It does presuppose the historical act by which man draws forth religious truth from concealment, as the existential phenomenologist would put it. The coming-to-pass or disclosure of religious truth in the light of human consciousness is characterized by "semidarkness." That is, its issuing forth is "not pure light but the chiaroscuro of light and darkness" (Luijpen 1969:137-50, 144-45). Each act of disclosure dispels a little darkness.

Clearly enough, religious truth is never absolute but must progressively be unraveled as it emerges and issues forth gradually and is known by profile (Dondeyne 1958:36-66). This unfolding of truth by profile presupposes the given situation of man at a particular time and place in his historical development, and whose readiness to see and disclose truth in terms of his present situation facilitates the birth of a new meaning. Again, the birth of a new meaning presupposes the discloser or discoverer who is no less than man himself, who should be willing enough to disclose whatever new meaning he discovers in the light of human consciousness. For the birth of a new meaning is the moment of its discovery and its authenticity begins with its disclosure so that others may be benefited.

In consequence, religious consciousness undergoes a history of progressive disclosure insofar as it goes hand in hand with man's restricted grasp of the real. That is why man's consciousness of God must be purified (i.e., reformulated, recast, or reconceptualized) as man becomes progressively aware of what his relationship with God must mean. In other words, religious meanings develop and change as man unfolds himself and further grows in self-awareness. In the process, old concepts of God become unnecessary and dysfunctional. They become inutile and irrelevant to contemporary exigencies.

The Hellenistic images of God, for instance, as the transcendent Supreme Being or the greatest King and Ruler living in an eternal place called heaven above the clouds, would make the contemporary

believer a drug addict, indulging in chimeras and hallucinations. Most of all, he would become alienated not only from himself and from his fellows but also from the world. Contemporary believers have outgrown these images of God and this explains the resounding claim that "God is dead" (Vahanian 1967; Altizer & Hamilton 1968). God has died in our society, in our morality, and in our private life. In the Philippine setting, for example, bank robbers and kidnappers have "murdered" God. In people's morality, God is set aside when our leaders and politicians commit rampant graft and corruption at the expense of the Filipino masses. In our private life where parents rape their own daughters and grandparents their own granddaughters, the God of explanation for good and evil is dead.

Moreover, the traditional God has already become "intellectually superfluous, emotionally dispensable, and morally intolerable" (Robinson 1965:107-16). People no longer need God to explain the origin of life or the cause of cancer and AIDS. To attribute these diseases to God's will as a sort of punishment to patients for their wrongdoings or sins would be misleading and fallacious. Modern medical science and bio-technology can now explain what God supposedly does. The behavioral sciences have taken on God's role in resolving people's emotional and family problems. People nowadays prefer to approach and consult the psychologist and the psychiatrist rather than a priest or a nun. Indeed, the contemporary individual has already accepted the burden of responsibility in solving moral predicaments rather than leaving them to God. He can no longer tolerate God or the church to meddle in his personal life and family affairs.

By all indications, the alleged death of God is a cultural phenomenon, expressive of the obsolescence of old images of God which have already become ineffectual. This phenomenon can be interpreted as a critical moment in contemporary history which is an opportune time for growth in self-awareness. It obliges every believer to take a stand and reflect anew upon his life in relation to God. For inasmuch as life is a continuous process of unfolding, man (especially the Filipino) has to seek ever new answers to ever new questions, particularly the problem of God. One's fidelity to God demands a constant re-examination and retranslation of the formulations of his belief in terms that befit concrete experiences. It is in this light that the task of writing this book in search of an

alternative to a "dead God" was laboriously undertaken. It is hoped that the self-dedication and painstaking efforts invested in this endeavor will dispel a little darkness.



## Introduction

Today, social changes and scientifico-biomedical developments have outrun our thoughts and views of reality, particularly the traditional concepts of God. Social transformations have brought about a change in our thinking and this change has created a new image of man. This new image of man has rendered old theological structures obsolescent and irrelevant. Old meanings and names of God have outlived their usefulness, have become obsolete, and are no longer credible to contemporary man. No wonder, whenever a person discusses today's floating problems with students and mention the problem of God, they often rebuff him by saying: "Why should we not look deeper into the problems of man, especially the Filipino, rather than the problem of God? What's the relevance of talking about God in the midst of economic disaster, and the soaring prices of basic commodities. Why all this talk about God while our countrymen are getting more impoverished, devastated by lahar and typhoons, ravished by hunger, poverty, election fraud and injustice, disgusted by the rampant practice of graft and corruption in all sectors of Philippine society, and terrified by bombings, killings, terrorism, and bank robberies?

These and other similar remarks are usually heard from young and old alike who have already become allergic to the once-upon-a-time sacred word **God**. But why? Why this indifference to God of people living in the so-called only Christian country in Asia? Why this allergy to the God-problem in a nation regarded as the bastion of Catholicism in the Far East? Is this an ominous sign of the times that God indeed is dead because we have killed him, hence we are all his murderers? Or, is there something wrong with the Filipino concept of God?

This book attempts to disclose certain possible reasons for this situation and to propose some directions which theism should undertake if it is to be relevant and more meaningful to contemporary situations. It will surely create some conflict, cynicism, and discomfort, but it will, at the same time, provide fertile grounds for further

reflection and social concern to all who are interested in and committed to the religious consciousness of the Filipino. In the succeeding paragraphs, let's examine what students and other observers say about the meaning of Christianity to the Filipinos in general.

### Filipino Theistic Frames

Firstly, the Filipino Christian orientation has always associated the concept of God with going to church, confession, holy communion, vespers, fasting and abstinence, prayers, invocations, Tuesday-Thursday novenas to St. Jude, every-Friday devotion to the Black Nazarene, every-Wednesday worship to Our Mother of Perpetual Help, etc. Yet, many Filipinos observe that "**itim pa rin ang uwak**" (the crow is still black), i.e., problems of all sorts have escalated in spite of these so-called religious practices. Not a few people believe that "**kahit pumuti ang uwak at umitim ang tagak**" (even though the crow turns white and the heron becomes black), adherence to these religious routines cannot solve our mounting problems (Timbreza 1984:1-23).

Secondly, God is intimately bound up with such concepts as afterlife (**kabilang buhay**), immortality, sanctifying grace, sacraments, heaven, perfect happiness, penance, indulgences, and the Way of the Cross. However, "**mamamatay na lang ang tao**," so many people declare, "**wala pa ring nangyayari**" (man is already dying yet nothing happens). The Filipino never feels the relevance of all these theological notions to his life here and now. Perhaps, he can understand their conceptual meanings, but what the masses really feel are the pangs of hunger, the traumatic impact of the peso devaluation, and the skyrocketing cost of living. What they actually experience are skyrocketing prices, exorbitant house rentals, or starvation salaries. It seems that the **father** in God does not hear and would not know how to help; He seems incapable of communicating Himself.

For this reason, a great number of people say "**sa iyo na lang ang eternal life, basta mayroon akong makakain araw-araw**" (you can keep your eternal life as long as I have something to eat everyday). Nevertheless, many insist: "Behold, God's kingdom is not of this world! He is the Great Beyond, the greatest Superstar of all superstars. Anyone who loses his life for God's sake shall find it

and if one is poor, lo! his is the kingdom of heaven" (Jn 19:36; Mt 5:3). With this daydreaming, the poor man gets along well with a grumbling stomach. This must have prompted Nietzsche to say that all religions are at bottom systems of cruelty, hence he called their representatives, the preachers of death; for him preaching eternal life to the impoverished masses is no different from teaching death (Nietzsche 1956:193; 1961:209-210).

Thirdly, God is love (*ang Diyos ay pag-ibig*), so Christianity teaches. Notwithstanding, some are convinced He does not care for all the ill-fated "salvage" victims, the tyrannized and downtrodden. "*Ang iniibig ng Diyos ay ang malalakas, ang oligarks at kronis*" (God loves only the strong, the oligarchs, and the cronies). The contemporary Filipino thinks this way precisely because he has eyes to see what others belabor to deny by preaching: "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven" (Mt 19:23-24). Miraculously, this biblical statement has the same therapeutic effect as opium and marijuana. Hence, believing that a rich man can hardly go to heaven, the poor Filipino gets drugged, forgetting all his troubles. He is contented with his plight. *Kawawa naman* (how miserable he is). Anyway, he can enter the "kingdom come." If only for this reason, it is no surprise at all why Karl Marx considered religion as the opiate of the people.

Fourthly, Filipinos have traditionally equated Christianity with spirituality (*kabalan, ispiritwalidad*), for that is the orientation given by their foreign colonizers. As a result, Christian religion has concentrated so much on the salvation of the soul that it has neglected the liberation of the whole man. Churchmen are primarily interested in souls or spiritual retreats, and not so much in people who have to eat in order to survive. In effect, this Christian spiritual attitude has taught us to despise our bodies, ourselves, and it makes loving oneself a vice. Hence, we often hear some people preaching: "For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world but loses the salvation of his only soul?" (Mt 16:26). "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's and unto God the things that are God's" (Mt 22:21).

The Filipino, however, is neither a pure soul nor a lifeless body, but an "embodied spirit, a besouled bodily being" (Dondeyne 1964:137-147). This embodiment dimension of human existence

clearly indicates that materiality (the human body) is the way by which the spirit expresses itself. What affects the body, therefore, also affects the spirit for the latter needs the former by which to unfold and exteriorize itself. Moreover, being spatio-temporal, the Filipino lives in space and in time, not in eternity. His being-in-time implies his being-situated in the world. His experience of situated existence is an experience of existential needs and human meanings: survival, subsistency, shelter, security, dignity, freedom. His being-in-a-situation also means he is a member of society, a worker, a father or mother, and a citizen, each of whom has his/her own role to play and obligations to carry out in order to maintain a peaceful and healthy family and citizenry.

Lastly, Filipinos ordinarily associate Christianity with priests, nuns, and other churchmen. As a result, their faults and shortcomings are attributed to the Christian religion in general. So they condemn religion. However, whenever we commit the same moral lapses or wrongdoings, we try to exculpate or excuse ourselves by saying: "*Tayo'y tao lamang; isa pa, hindi tayo mga pari*" (We are but human; and for another thing, we are not priests). The implication is that religious people are sanctified, hence sin-proof, so that whenever they perpetrate evil there must be something wrong with the religion they represent. *Kawawang mga pari* (How really pitiful priests are.)

These are some of the existential discrepancies of Filipino Christian orientation which keen observers have called "split-levels" or "time-lags" (Bulatao 1966). The implacable Nietzsche referred to them as the "distortion of human values" (Nietzsche 1956). What one often hears from some Christian believers and political leaders is very much different from what they actually do. What they do is often the opposite of what they preach. And very often, what they do sounds much louder than what they say. Underscoring the same perception, E.S. Quito has put it most graphically by stating "Most of those who search for God do so in most abstract terms and the God they find, if they find Him, is too elusive, too far removed from reality" (1971:9-10). Realizing the felt need for theistic relevance, "Our times demand a different God," she has said, "a God that corresponds to the age in which we live." For in her view, "The old meanings and names of God have outlived their usefulness, not to mention their relevance to contemporary times" (Quito 1971:11,23).



## Death of the God-Hypothesis

This being the case, it is worth taking the challenge to extricate ourselves from archaic theological formulations and to look for an alternative to a dead God. For our times demand a substitute for a deceased God, one that corresponds to a world come age. To be honest with ourselves and to God, as Bishop John Robinson (1963) keenly observes, we have to remold theistic belief and, if necessary, change some theological categories. If revelation is interpreted as the gradual disclosure of God's reality to human consciousness, then theological approach must be reassessed time and again in terms of the ever-increasing predicaments confronting the believer.

The God-hypothesis is dead and has lost its practical value for the interpretation or comprehension of nature, and often stands in the way of scientific explanation. The God conceived as an invisible provider to whom we run for immediate assistance and as a kind of *deus ex machina* whom we ask to solve insoluble problems is dead (Bonhoeffer 1966:93), not only because we have killed Him but because we have long buried Him as well; that is to say, we have already ceased to respond to that kind of God-concept, except perhaps as a matter of routine or sanctimonious practice for many people and yet they ignore Him in their daily lives.

Thus, in an arduous attempt to search for an alternative to the dead God-hypothesis, reflection should begin with Erich Fromm's theory of human alienation and the problem of God. He believes that God worship results in man's estrangement from himself, from his fellowmen, and from the world. His position is not without some nobility, and it is a welcome antidote to the widespread sense of incongruity between Christian belief and the contemporary experiences of man. As a backdrop, his theory of human alienation would enable us to situate the exploration and quest for alternatives to a dead God. A study of Fromm's concept of alienation is as interesting as it is relevant. It is interesting because this thinker has endeavored to combine sociology, psychoanalysis, and existential philosophy in understanding man in his alienated condition; relevant, because it involves man's inner need for self-grounding, i.e., his quest for personal meanings in his being-with-others in the world, which is the major theme of contemporary thought.

Reflective analysis and critical explication, then, will take the following direction: whereas in his deep concern for man and in his protest against dehumanization and man's transformation into a thing one feels a sense of solidarity with Fromm, is it true (as he himself honestly believes) that, first, affirmation of God means man's loss of selfhood, his alienation from the world and from his fellowmen? Is it to be taken as an escape from, or a threat to, his freedom and autonomy in the world? Second, is God just "a historically conditioned concept," or "a hypostatized subjective datum" which has no reality in itself? Third, what is the alternative to the dead and alienation-causing God? Answers to these questions will be subsequently unfolded.

Thus, this book will present in Chapter I, the human situation and existential facticities which, according to Fromm, have led man towards his alienated condition; trace in Chapter II, the emergence of the phenomenon of alienation in such situations that are distinctively human and at the same time reflect upon the various meanings and forms of alienation; discuss in Chapter III, Fromm's concept of freedom and historicity in connection with man's existential struggle for self-liberation, for true independence and for becoming fully born; give in Chapter IV, a reflective and critical appreciation of his concept of alienation by unfolding its humanizing and dehumanizing dimensions with respect to the dialectical bond of human existence to reconcile the affirmation of God's existence with human freedom and to explicate the relevance of Fromm's message to the contemporary believer in the light of Dewart's view of de-Hellenizing Christian absolute theism; and recapitulate in Chapter V, the reflective analysis of Fromm's concept of alienation, stressing his position as one of the possible interpretations of the great problem that is man, and to delineate certain formulations that theism should undertake in order to make it relevant and credible to the contemporary believer.

Each chapter, including the Conclusion, is divided into a number of sections. Apart from the sections of Chapter IV (in which a critical evaluation and the relevance of alienation are presented), each section is organized to develop Fromm's point of view on the topic being discussed. A brief concluding part, pointing out the major areas that have been covered, is provided at the end not only of each section of every chapter but of each chapter in the



text, in order to give the reader a general grasp of the subject matter under consideration.

The critical evaluation will be focused on an existential-phenomenological reflection on man. It will try to point out the negative role of alienation in man's unlimited openness to "being," in his restless drive to understand the "real"—"that which is." The negative role is the critical moment in the process of human evolution that provides the necessary corrective insight which is helpful to understand better man's search for ultimate meaning. That is, alienation is ultimately bound up with man's quest for relatedness and transcendence, and with his bearing witness to the irrefutable fact that "something is." And it is not unlikely that man's concepts of God which have been based on his restricted grasp of "that-which-is" have, in one way or the other, caused human alienation.

Thus, one's honest answer to Fromm will be that **an alternative** to man's historically conditioned belief would seem to be one possible solution to self-estrangement. For instance, man must outgrow the Hellenistic images of God as an omnipotent and eternal being and respond rather to his **presence** among people as a self-communicating reality. In this way, an authentic concern for, as well as an unalienated commitment to, human existence in dialogue with God would perhaps be what returns man to himself, to his fellowmen and to his world. Taken as such, Fromm's concept of alienation could open the believer's eyes to some particularized and enslaving images or conceptualizations of God (that must be destroyed) and would thus pave the way for the **integration of belief** with the living experiences of contemporary man.

## Introducing Fromm

Born as an only child in Frankfurt am Main, Germany, on March 23, 1900, Erich Fromm is well known for his writings and lectures on psychoanalysis, philosophy, psychology, and sociology. His emphasis on "self-realization" or the full birth of man aligns him with the great contemporary figures who have helped interpret the "image" of man in the 20th century (Friedman 1967:227 ff). The absurdity of human life and the "irrationality of social behavior" (Evans 1966:56-57) he had witnessed and felt during the First World War prompted him to study psychology, sociology, and philosophy in Germany. In 1922 he received a Ph.D. in psychoanalysis from the University of Heidelberg. He also studied at the University of Munich and at the University of Frankfurt. He concluded his training at the renowned Psychoanalytic Institute in Berlin, and in 1930 he became a practicing psychoanalyst. Apart from his work in Berlin, he taught at the Psychoanalytic Institute in Frankfurt and also became an instructor and member in the Institute for Social Research at the University of Frankfurt. That institute carried on its work at the Columbia University in New York after the Nazis came to power in Germany (Fromm 1986:96-97).

During his university studies he came upon authors who might seem like strange bedfellows for the Old Testament prophets, whose writings Fromm knew by heart (Fromm 1986:96-97). The stories from the Old Testament made a powerful and lasting impression on him. Buddha, Marx, Bachofen, and Freud were the main intellectual influences to come into his life at that time. As different, and even as antagonistic, as those authors may seem, Fromm managed to bring them together under one roof.

In 1935 Fromm settled in the United States where he practiced psychoanalysis, taught at various universities, and founded several important institutes for psychoanalysis and social psychology, and at the same time insisted on remaining a practicing analyst working directly with patients. He had written several books which include: *Escape from Freedom*, *The Art of Loving*, *Marx's Concept of Man*, *May Man Prevail?*, *The Dogma of Christ and Other Essays*, *The Heart of*

*Man, The Sane Society, You Shall be as Gods, Man for Himself, Psychoanalysis and Religion, Beyond the Chains of Illusion, The Forgotten Language, Sigmund Freud's Mission, The Revolution of Hope, To Have or To Be?*, and *Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis* (with D.T. Suzuki and R. de Martino). Some of these books have been serialized in *World Perspectives Series* planned and edited by Ruth Nanda Anshen.

As an American citizen, Fromm lived in Cuernavaca, Mexico where he accepted a post in 1949 at the National University of Mexico, which awarded him an honorary professorship after his retirement in 1965. He had lectured at the New School for Social Research and had been on the faculties of the William Alanson White Institute of Psychiatry, Psychoanalysis, and Psychology; Bennington College; Michigan State University; and Columbia University. He was also a professor of psychoanalysis at the Medical School of the National University of Mexico, and also taught at New York University until his death in 1980.

Fromm was a thinker who had striven hard to bring together various problem areas that are often treated separately—sociological, philosophical, psychological, and religious. He had tried as much as possible to overcome "the thought habits of compartmentalization" (Fromm 1968: viii). For any attempt to understand man, in his view, must include knowledge of the specifically human conditions of existence, of man's biological instinctive equipment as well as of the social influences of the society in which he lives and of the religious, moral, and psychological problems with which he must cope. If one omits any of these, he has a crippled and restricted picture of man.

In all his books he has attempted to translate Freud, Hegel, Spinoza, and Marx (the four big figures, among others, who have greatly influenced him) into philosophical and socio-psychological insights which seem to him to correspond more with recent philosophical and socio-psychological perspectives. In short, his writings and his work reflect an education and great sophistication not only in psychology and psychoanalysis but also in political science, economics, philosophy, religion, and social theory (Evans 1966:62).

For this reason, Fromm is recognizable in many important respects as the "Modern Pragmatist"—more exactly, as that higher

level of the Modern Pragmatist presented to us by John Dewey in his ethics of potentiality (Friedman 1967:227 ff). But, in all his books, one special point of interest upon which he has reflected philosophically, sociologically, psychologically—and even empirically and religiously—is the "phenomenon of human alienation," especially with regard to man's relationship with God. This will be our main concern in this book alongside our search for an alternative to a dead God.



## Chapter I

# **The Human Situation and Existential Facticities**

Human existence is indeed an apparent absurdity. Man is both an animal and not an animal at the same time. He feels just as the animal does. He is meaning-conscious, but the animal is not. He can raise questions as his own existence is a big question in itself; the animal, however, cannot. Thus, for a good grasp of man's paradoxical situation it is necessary first to devote one's attention to those dimensions of human life which not only make man more than the animal but also drive him to search for personal meanings and values. What are these specifically human attributes and conditions that existentially distinguish man from animal? In what sense is human existence considered a great paradox? And what particular craving or need does this paradoxical situation create in man? These are the focal points of inquiry in this chapter. They have a significant bearing on the general problem of this book insofar as man, in his attempt to solve them, will finally find himself alienated not only from himself but from his fellowmen as well.

This chapter will start with the emergence of man from nature. Next, it will reflect upon his situationality and facticity; and finally it will indicate the peculiar need that man's absurd situation creates in himself, according to Erich Fromm.

### **Man as the Freak of Nature**

The animal cannot go beyond itself to understand itself. Precisely because it is a part of nature and is lived through the latter's biological laws, it cannot transcend nature. The animal does not have reason, hence cannot think, rationalize, or judge. It has no sense of moral rectitude, and no awareness of itself as itself. Thus, the animal has no concept of truth, morality and value (Fromm 1965:29).



### *Alternative to A Dead God*

Insofar as the animal is equipped by nature to cope with the very conditions of existence it is to meet, it will not be incorrect to say, in Fromm's view, that animal existence is one of harmony between the animal and nature. For this reason, that animal action is essentially determined by instincts rather than by reason becomes clear enough. On the other hand, through the unique break of the animal evolution in which action ceases to be essentially determined by instinct, man is born. In man, for Fromm, action is no longer fixed by hereditarily-given mechanisms, for he is born without such equipment for appropriate activity as the animal possesses.

The birth of man, says Fromm, might have lasted for hundreds of thousands of years, but what matters much is that a new species arose, that life becomes aware of itself, transcending nature. This new species is man who has become "the freak of nature" (Fromm 1965:29-30; [PR] 1967:22; 1968:62-71), hence, an anomaly, because of his self-awareness, reason and imagination. An animal he truly is, but the only animal that is aware of its awareness. It is precisely because of his self-awareness that man, according to Fromm, can go beyond himself and transcend nature; that he wants to make an imprint on the world; and that he searches for some unity, some meaning.

Situationally, then, for Fromm, man is a part of nature, subject to her physical laws and unable to alter them, yet he transcends the rest of nature insofar as he is capable of understanding the very forces to which he is subjected and can by his understanding take an active part in his own fate. Moreover, he is aware of himself as a unique and distinct entity; and he alone, among his fellow animals, can remember the past, visualize the future, and denote things and his experiences by symbols. With his reason he can conceive and understand the world. Through his imagination he can reach beyond the range of the sensible and envisage the invisible and the unknown.

Unlike the brute, whose activities are essentially instinctive, man has to make decisions by himself and for himself. Every second is a moment of decision, for the better or the worse. He is confronted with a series of alternatives and there is a risk of failure in every decision he makes. For whenever he makes a decision, man can never be certain of the outcome. If any decision does not imply some risk of incertitude, contends Fromm, it has not been a

### *The Human Situation and Existential Facticities*

decision in the true sense of the word. The result of a decision always depends on many factors which transcend man's power to control.

Nonetheless, the consoling fact remains that, as Fromm affirms, man alone is the animal that is capable of decision and conviction. He can plan for his action, and can act on that plan. Only man can hope, and he alone is endowed with a conscience. His conscience is the voice that calls him back to himself. Man's conscience, says Fromm, enables him to know what he ought to do in order to become himself; it helps him to remain aware of the aims of his life and of the norms necessary for the attainment of such aims (Fromm 1968:17, 62; [MH]1967:234; 1942:26; Evans 1966:23).

From what has been explicated, therefore, follows the fact of "abnormality" (this is not Fromm's term, it is used simply to describe man's conflicting nature without necessarily referring to its psychological connotation) that is so distinctive of man. Primarily because he is an animal, man has natural propensities; but precisely because man is more than animal, he can extend himself beyond nature and himself. This will become increasingly clear in the succeeding sections.

### **Man's Thrownness in the World**

As man is the only animal gifted with self-knowledge, he is likewise the only animal for whom his own existence is a big problem, which he has to solve and from which he can never escape. Man's existence, asserts Fromm, is a disturbing question rather an answer in itself. Paradoxically, every answer to it again becomes a new question which urges man towards ever new solutions; and every solution he reaches always leaves him perplexed and discontented. No longer can he return to the pre-human state of harmony with nature; he must proceed to develop his reason until he becomes the master of nature and of himself (Fromm 1967:49-50; 1965:30; 1956:7). He has emerged from the animal kingdom, has transcended nature, but he still is part of it. Man is "set apart while being a part" (Fromm 1967:49-50) of nature; he is homeless, yet chained to the home he shares with all creatures.

Without his own knowledge, consent or will, man is "cast into this world at an accidental place and time and he is forced out of



it, again accidentally" (Fromm 1967:49-50; 1965:30, 41). In this regard, says Fromm, man is not unlike plants and animals. Out of a situation which was definite (i.e., oneness with nature in a pre-human stage), he has been "thrown" into a situation which, by all indications, is indefinite, open, and uncertain. There is certainty only about the past as past, declares Fromm, and about the future only insofar as that is death, which is actually a return to the past—"the inorganic state of matter." Man bewilderingly feels that existence, in all its appearances, is indeed a tragic fate. That insecurity is the high price which he has to pay for self-consciousness is not untrue. Certainty, he has none. The only indubitable prediction man can make is: "I shall die" (Fromm 1956:8; 1942:27; 1968:62; 1965:31). Of this, he becomes aware as his ultimate fate; however, he tries to deny it in manifold phantasies.

Thus, being aware of his facticity, man, explains Fromm, realizes his powerlessness and the limitations of his existence; he visualizes his inevitable end: **death**. Accordingly, man feels insignificant and infinitesimally small in comparison with the world. Alone, he stands as a stranger thrown into a threatening, limitless universe. Life in all aspects—bodily and spiritual—is by necessity insecure and uncertain. Man is condemned to live in uncertainty and in risks. He has only his own efforts to rely on, and only the full development of his powers can give him "a modicum of strength and fearlessness" (Fromm 1967:49; 1965:30, 174; 1942:17).

And it is precisely because of man's self-awareness (i.e., awareness of his short span of life, the fact that without his will he is born, and against his will he will surely die, and die before those whom he loves, or they before him) that in life he gets bored and discontented (Fromm 1956:8; 1967:49; 1965:30; Evans 1966:101). His disunited existence becomes indeed an unbearable prison. His feeling of aloneness and helplessness before the ungovernable forces of nature, and his experience of separateness and powerlessness amidst disease and natural destruction, arouse in him anxiety and despair. For man, indeed, is the only animal that can despair, that can be anxious.

This is the life situation into which man finds himself thrown. Helpless, he cannot extricate himself from the world without absurdity.

### **The Existential Dichotomies in Man**

The emergence of reason, as has been shown, has created a dichotomy within man which constantly forces him to strive for new answers. Fromm writes that man is beset by the existential dichotomy of being within nature and yet transcending it by the fact of having self-awareness and choice. Thus, while reason is man's blessing, it is also his curse. Reason forces him to cope everlastingly with the task of solving an insoluble dichotomy. Human existence, in this regard, is different from that of all other organisms. It is, as Fromm affirms, in a state of constant and insurmountable disequilibrium (Fromm 1967:49; 1966:88).

Man can by no means free himself from this existential dichotomy. He cannot get rid of his mind, however he wants to; he cannot rid himself of his body as long he is alive; in fact, his body makes him want to remain alive. And the most fundamental existential dichotomy is that between life and death. For Fromm, the fact that we all have to die is unalterable. Of this truth man is anxiously aware, and his very awareness bothers him so much. Furthermore, man's mortality results in another dichotomy: while he is the bearer of all human potentialities, the short span of his life does not permit their full realization even under the most favorable conditions and circumstances (Fromm 1967:50-51; 1965:30).

Viewed from another dimension, man is existentially alone and related at the same time. Fromm makes it clear that inasmuch as man is a unique being whose existence belongs to him and to nobody else, he is alone, irreducible to anyone else. He is alone when he has to judge, to make decisions, solely by the power of his reason. On the other hand, man cannot bear to be alone, to be unrelated to his fellowmen. His happiness, his self-realization, depends, to a large extent, on the solidarity he feels with others.

These existential dichotomies man cannot annul, in Fromm's view, although he can react to them in various ways relative to his character and culture. For instance, man can try to escape from his inner restlessness by ceaseless activity in pleasure, or **worshipping things** of this world. Likewise, he can try "to **abrogate his freedom**" and turn himself into an instrument of powers outside of himself, submerging his self-identity in them. But in spite of all these,

### *Alternative to A Dead God*

man remains dissatisfied, anxious, and restless (Fromm 1967:51, 53-54; 1966:57,61). He still feels a deep, excruciating disquiet about the riddles of life. He will never cease to be perplexed, to wonder, and to raise new questions. For his inherent dichotomies (i.e., his separateness and wish for union, alienation, suffering, fear of freedom, capacity for hate and destruction, capacity for love and indifference, etc.) remain a perennial problem.

There is only one solution to man's dichotomous existence, proposes Fromm, and that is to face the truth. Man must acknowledge his fundamental aloneness and solitude in a world indifferent to his fate. He must recognize, he emphasizes, that "there is no power transcending him which can solve his problem for him" (Fromm 1967:53-54, 221-22). Man alone must accept the responsibility for himself and the fact that only by using his own powers can he give meaning to his life. In Fromm's interpretation, man has no other way to be one with the world and simultaneously to be one with himself, to be related to others and to retain his self-integrity, than by making use of his own latent powers. Failing to do this, he cannot achieve harmony and self-integration; he will be torn and split apart, driven to escape from himself, from the feeling of powerlessness, boredom and impotence. But if man recognizes the human situation, his capacity to unfold his powers, he will be able to succeed in his task: to be himself and for himself. (More of this will be treated at length in Chapter III, *et passim*.)

It is thus clear from the above explication that man's ineradicable dichotomies in life have compounded his innermost ennui and restlessness. Fromm thinks that an open, frank acceptance of his apparently absurd situation seems to be the only alternative left for man. Really, man experiences his existence as full of conflicts.

### *The Inherent Contradiction in Human Existence*

In the light of the foregoing reflection upon man's existential situationality, this section will now inquire more deeply into the real essence of man, as seen by Fromm. For the relationship of what has been discussed to the actual nature of man should become immediately apparent.

### *The Human Situation and Existential Factcities*

Man's true essence, reflects Fromm, does not in any way lie in a substance which remains unchangeable throughout history. For if one assumes a certain substance as constituting man's essence, he is forced into accepting, since such assumption implies non-evolutionary and non-historical position, that there has been no basic change in man since the very beginning of his emergence. And there is no denying the fact that a tremendous difference exists between our most developed ancestors and civilized man as he now appears in the last four to six thousand years of history (Fromm 1964:115-16). On the contrary, if one accepts an evolutionary concept and thus believes that man is constantly transforming himself, he is faced with another problem: what then is left as a content for an alleged "nature" or "essence" of man? To resolve this apparent paradox, Fromm explains: "I believe that the dilemma can be solved by defining the essence of man not as a given quality or substance, but as a contradiction inherent in human existence" (Fromm 1964:116).

This existential contradiction, further explains Fromm, is to be found mainly in two sets of facts: 1) Like all other animals, man is endowed with "instinctual equipment," but unlike other animals, man's instincts are insufficient "to insure his survival unless he produces the means to satisfy his material needs and develops speech and tools"; 2) Like other animals, man also has intelligence which enables him "to use thought processes for the attainment of immediate practical aims" (Fromm 1964:116-17). But, unlike his fellow animals, man has self-awareness. With this mental quality, he is aware of his death, of others as others, i.e., as friends, strangers, or as enemies.

Man, then, transcends (as has been remarked earlier) all other life, precisely because his is a "life aware of itself." Man is in nature, subject to its dictates and accidents, yet he is outside because he stands out in nature; he can look at nature at a given angle, so to speak. As such, man is confronted with the frightening conflict of being the prisoner of nature, yet being free in his thoughts; being a part of nature, and yet to be (as it were) a "freak of nature." Hence, man is neither here nor there. Put differently, he is partly animal and partly non-animal; partly finite and partly infinite; partly natural and partly supernatural. (By this Fromm means that man "has fallen out of nature" and still is in it. Because of self-awareness, man transcends nature, i.e., he is in a sense "above"



### *Alternative to A Dead God*

nature, standing out in it, hence supernatural.) For this reason, asserts Fromm, man belongs to two worlds in conflict with each other. Thus, there is necessity for man to find ever-new solutions for the contradictions in his existence, to find ever-higher forms of unity with nature, with his fellowmen and himself (Fromm 1964:117-22; 1965:31,34).

Undoubtedly, man is driven not by an innate drive for progress (according to Fromm) but by the need to solve his existential contradictions, which arise again at every level of development. For insofar as man's essence is neither the good nor the evil, but his different and contradictory possibilities, he cannot live statically; he seeks ceaselessly for an equilibrium, for a new harmony, for a new meaning. But, paradoxically enough, in spite of his desire to resolve his existential absurdity, he ultimately feels his life is a tragedy, because self-development remains essentially unfinished even under the best conditions. Accordingly, "man," despairs Fromm, "always dies before he is fully born" (Fromm 1867:50,98), an utter contradiction indeed.

It is not enough, however, to see this seemingly irremediable conflict. It is necessary, dares Fromm, to go beyond it and to recognize that this very conflict demands a solution. Emphatically, he asks: What can man do to cope with this fright inherent in his existence? What can he do to find a harmony to liberate him from the torture of aloneness, and to permit him to be at home in the world, to find a sense of unity?

The answer to these queries, warns Fromm, must not be theoretical (although it should be reflected in the insights and theories about life), but one of *man's whole being*. The answer may be better or worse, but even the worst answer must fulfill: it must help man to overcome the sense of separateness and to gain a sense of union, of oneness, of belonging.

To continue, therefore, what constitutes the essence of man is the question of his own existence and the need for an answer; for the various forms of human existence, as far as Fromm is concerned, are not the answers to the conflict which, in itself, is the essence of man. Man's existence is indeed beset by the contradictions which he is called on to deal with without ever solving them. To be born means that life poses a question, viz., the problem of resolving man's existential dichotomies, the problem of life's ultimate

### *The Human Situation and Existential Facticities*

meaning. For to have been born human, as Fromm well observes, is a great burden (Fromm 1964:117-18; 1963:103-4; Evans 1966:103). To what extent man has been able to unburden himself of this existential oddity is the next problem to be considered.

### *The Need for Relatedness and Transcendence*

As discussed in the preceding pages, man (with the emergence of self-awareness through a long process of evolution, in which his action is no longer essentially determined by mere instincts) has lost his original home in nature and he cannot return to it any more. Life is experienced as a problem that requires an answer. The essential contradiction in his existence forces him to seek a solution, to find an answer to the question which life asks him from the moment of his birth. He seeks an answer to the question why he was born, why he is living. He feels insecure if he cannot liberate himself from his existential prison. He is impelled, then, to go forward and, with everlasting effort, to make the unknown known by filling in with answers the blank spaces of his knowledge, according to Fromm. Man must give an account to himself of himself, and of the meaning of his existence. He is driven to overcome the inner split of his life, tormented by a craving for "absoluteness," for another kind of harmony which can lift the curse by which he was separated from nature, from his fellow men and from himself. Hence, he has to emerge fully from his natural home and to find a new home, one which he creates, by making the world a human one and by becoming truly himself. The need to unite himself in some form or other with men and with the world outside appears to be the alternative which he has to take into account (Fromm 1965:31; 1966:58; 1956:8; 1967:50; Evans 1966:100-1). The disruption of man's existence as a result of the emergence of self-awareness has generated the need to transcend the rest of nature. And this need results in an imperative drive to restore a unity and equilibrium between himself and the world (Fromm [PR] 1967:22,24; [MH] 1967:48-48,55).

Man, then, says Fromm, feels the need to be related to the world outside himself in order to overcome his feeling of separateness and aloneness. To his fellowmen, he has to relate himself so as to satisfy his physical and psychological needs. Nonetheless, the

### *Alternative to A Dead God*

satisfaction of such needs is insufficient to make him sane and happy (Fromm 1942:15; 1965:31-32,67; 1956:9; [MH] 1967:54). Hence, the solution to his need for relatedness is exceedingly more complex than it appears. And all this aggravates man's uncertainty. He is aware of the insufficiency of his solutions. The more solution he tries, the clearer he understands the risks and dangers of his existence. Eventually, he succumbs to illness and old age, and then dies. Or, those whom he loves die before him, or after him, and there is no comfort in either case.

Yet, man is man; he cannot be content with the passive role of a creature, "with the role of dice cast out of a cup" (Fromm 1966:70-76; 1965:41; 1956:51). In his insecurity, he looks for **absolutes** that promise certainty, which he can follow, and with which he can identify himself. Determined, he seeks to find an answer to the human situation and his existential dichotomies. He is driven by the urge to transcend the role of the creature, the accidentalness and passivity of his existence, by becoming a **creator** himself. He feels his security depends on the satisfaction of those needs which are specifically **human**, and which stem from the conditions of the human situation: **the need for rootedness and transcendence**, the need for a sense of identity, and the need for a frame of orientation.

There are many ways, admits Fromm, in which man can realize this need for relatedness and transcendence. Usually, man submits himself to others as the way to avoid anxiety and aloneness. And even if man's frame of orientation is utterly illusory, it satisfies his need for some meaning for at least some time. Whether he believes in some powerful animal, in a rain god, or in the superiority and destiny of his race, his need for some frame of orientation is, to some extent, satisfied. This all depends on the development of his reason and knowledge. His inner need for transcendence can be answered either by animal worship, human sacrifice, military conquest, ascetic renunciation, by the love of God, or by the **love of man**. Other answers are orgies, conformity, and creative activity. Some men can find meaning and unity by trying to regress to the animal stage, by doing away with what is distinctively human (e.g., reason and love), by transforming oneself into a thing. Others prefer to develop their specific powers to such an extent that they find unity with their fellowmen and with nature, by becoming **free men**, i.e., free not only from the chains of puerile illusions but

### *The Human Situation and Existential Factilities*

free to make the development of all man's potentialities the very aim of their own productive efforts (Fromm [MH] 1967:103; 1965:64; 1956:9-10,17).

It can be seen from the preceding paragraphs that the answers given to man's needs for transcendence differ widely in both content and form. As Fromm succinctly observes, man may worship animals, trees, idols of gold or stone, an invisible God, an ideal, a saintly man or diabolic leaders. Oftentimes, man may worship his ancestors, his own nation, class or party, money, wine, women or success. At times, man kills himself, the last remedy if all other means have failed to relieve him of his burden. But whatever their contents, all such answers respond to man's needs to have not only some thought system but also an object of devotion, giving meaning to his existence and to his position in the world. They are all attempts to resolve man's existential problems, most fundamentally, the problem of having been born human which is permeated with inherent contradictions, and which demands an ultimate meaning (Fromm [PR] 1967:24-26; 1942:131; 1965:35,42,66; [MH] 1967:102-3). (It is significant to note henceforth that, for Fromm, as man relates himself to what-is-other-than-himself, he feels "alienated" from himself; hence, another paradox is created by his desire to transcend nature and himself. This should be borne in mind as one proceeds to the next chapter.)

### **Conclusion**

In summary, the picture drawn in this chapter has been about man's situationality and facticity, in Fromm's view. In his thrown condition, man finds himself as an abnormal animal, i.e., "the freak of nature." Gifted with reason and self-awareness, he feels his existence is a contradiction. Perplexed by this existential malaise, he feels a need for transcendence. Transcending the world and himself, and relating himself to others, he also wants to remain independent, to be unique, to be himself. To what degree and in what sense man has lost or retained his self-identity (the problem of human alienation) and independence (as seen by Fromm) in relating himself to others and to some transcendent powers in order to satisfy his need for transcendence will be discussed next.



## Chapter II

# The Emergence and Nature of Human Alienation

In the light of the human condition discussed in the first chapter, Chapter II shows how this situation has alienated man. Specifically, this chapter aims to explain the emergence of human alienation. Likewise, it examines and reflects on the meaning of alienation, as well as indicates the effects of this phenomenon on man and how Fromm endeavors to resolve it.

### Man's Quest for Certainty in Idolatry

It has been shown earlier that human life is never certain, never predictable, never controllable. In Fromm's view, it is a form of inquiry whose definite answer man has to seek and look for. Man has to solve this problem, for he cannot rest in the given situation of a passive adaptation to nature. Even the most complete satiety of all his instinctive needs does not and cannot solve his human problem. The kind of answer to this query may be noble or trivial, but even the basest kind of meaning is immensely preferable to being alone. For the basis for man's need to solve his existential dilemma lies in the experience of aloneness and separateness. He has therefore an intense need for certainty (Evans 1966:96; Fromm 1952:15; 1964:42,98; 1965:34; 1956:63; 1968:49). He wants to believe that there is no need to doubt that the method by which he makes his decisions is right.

Hence, it is natural for man, contends Fromm, to long for some power which can give him certainty, protection, and love. This is one reason, then, why man believes in, and submits himself to, idols, gods, and political leaders. They all take out doubt and risk from man's decision-making. For man, they are a frame of orientation, or frame of reference, which enables him to organize a

### *The Emergence and Nature of Human Alienation*

consistent picture of the world as a condition for consistent action. They make him feel at home in the world in some form. Thus, man can be relieved of, and can escape from, the experience of utter hopelessness, disorientation, and uprootedness (Fromm 1965:51-52; 1968:63,65).

Because of this inner quest for certainty, man sometimes tries to identify himself with nature—the world of plants and animals. Thus he worships some aspects of trees or beasts as his idols, feeling that they are powerful, protecting forces. In relating himself to them, the individual finds some sort of certainty and security, a sense of belonging. In this way, according to Fromm, idol worship has begun in the life of man. The history of mankind up to the present, in his view, is primarily "the history of idol worship, from the primitive idols of clay and wood to the modern idols of the state, the leader, production and consumption, sanctified by the blessings of an idolized God" (Fromm 1966:43-44; 1961:44).

In idolatry, or idol worship, the idol, whatever it may be, represents the object of man's craving for certainty, power, and security. The passion, or the conceptual meaning, represented by the idol, is at the same time the supreme value within man's system of values. In the early history of man, explains Fromm, idols were animals, trees, sun, moon, stars, or figures of men and women and were called or known by thousands of symbols or names. One can see here, then, that in the case of idolized figurines or images, man spends his artistic energy on building idols which he worships but which are nothing but the results of his human effort. Thus, man's life forces have been objectified in forms of idols which are experienced no longer as the creative work of man but as some power apart from himself, which he worships and to which he submits his life.

Deceivingly enough, deplors Fromm, in idol worship, man transfers his passions and human qualities to the idol. The more man cherishes the idol, the more impoverished he becomes and the greater and more powerful becomes the idol. What man cannot see (or perhaps can see but refuses to acknowledge) is that, in worshipping whatever kind of idol, man thus worships himself, although this self is only a partial, limited aspect of man, e.g., his physical strength, intelligence, etc. And what is indeed significant to note here is that, by identifying himself with the idolized partial



aspect of himself, viz., the idol, man restricts himself to this aspect. Consequently, he loses his totality as a human being and ceases to grow. He becomes dependent on the idol which thereby determines his actions.

The irony, then, in Fromm's view, is that man worships the work of his own hands. And insofar as the idols are non-living objects or things (in the case of figures or statues), man worships things and bows before them. He venerates that which he himself has created. In doing so, he thereby transforms himself into a thing. To the things (i.e., the idols) of his own production, man transfers the qualities of his own life; and instead of experiencing himself as the creating person, he gains some meaning, some hint of security, by worshipping the idol. He has become estranged from his own human attributes. Accordingly, man, inasmuch as he reveres idols that are not alive and cannot see, shuts his own eyes so that he himself also cannot see. And since the idol is dead, man likewise is dead.

Obviously, man's nostalgic craving for certainty has led him to idolatry. Man, the meaning-conscious being which he truly is, consecrates the products of his own hands in search for existential meaning and personal protection. The implications of this need has now to be considered.

### Phenomenon of Alienation

Fromm traces the whole concept of human alienation back to its first unfolding in Western thought, e.g., in the Old Testament's notion of idolatry. With regard to this, the idol is the alienated embodiment of man's own powers; the idol worshipper is thus an alienated man, since he has impoverished himself (as has been seen above) by transferring his living powers into things outside of himself, which he has to worship in order to keep his sense of identity. "Idolatry," writes Fromm, "is the worship of the alienated, limited qualities of man. The idolater—just as every alienated man—is the poorer the more richly he endows his idol" (Fromm 1961:44-45; 1966:43-44; 1963:97). In idolatry, then, man does not experience himself as the center from which his living acts of love and reason radiate. A thing, indeed, he becomes; his neighbor

### *The Emergence and Nature of Human Alienation*

also becomes a thing, just as his idols are things. And his life forces become alienated from himself.

Other meanings of alienation as it is used in different contexts or universes of discourse will be enlightening. Fromm explains: *aliene* in French, or *alienado* in Spanish, is used to denote a psychotic or insane person; hence, in this sense, *alienation* means insanity, and an *alienist* is one who treats persons suffering from mental disorders. In law, continues Fromm, alienation is used to describe the act of transferring property or ownership to another, e.g., the transfer of some church property to secular ownership. Also, alienation may mean the alienation of affection of one's spouse, in which love being regarded as property has been transferred to a third person (Fromm 1965:111; 1969:12,56).

In modern times, notes Fromm, the term under consideration has been used by philosophers, psychologists and sociologists to denote an extraordinary variety of psycho-social disorders, including loss of self, anxiety states, depersonalization, apathy, social disorganization, meaninglessness (Fromm 1969:12-13). Besides all these, there are also several concepts frequently linked and confused with alienation, although, in fact, says Fromm, they are but important conditions or correlates of alienation. For instance, the idea of *anomie* which describes conditions of "normlessness in conduct" (Fromm 1969:12-13) is attributed to Durkheim and R.K. Merton as the chief proponents of this trend of thought. That is to say, it refers to a condition of breakdown in the cultural structure, or the disjunction between cultural norms or goals and the group's capacity to act in accordance with them.

Fromm makes it clear, however, that *anomie* as a social condition may be taken only as a significant cause of alienation, particularly when the response takes the form of retreat; but, it is not alienation as "a state of mind" (Fromm 1969:14). (This nature of alienation, i.e., as "a state of mind," is most pertinent to the evaluation later in which, as one will see, alienation in man's relation with God seems to lie in the very conceptual [n.b.: mental] formulation which man makes about God; cf. ch. iv.) For example, social isolation may lead to a state of estrangement, but not all isolates are alienated. In other words, loneliness and social disorganization are not necessarily alienation in themselves, because not all lonely persons are estranged and even in highly organized societies alienation may

### *Alternative to A Dead God*

likewise prevail. However, any one of these concepts may have different effects on peoples of varying personalities in different social structures, which predispose them to alienated conditions.

It is also interesting to note that, according to Fromm, the first existentialists to concern themselves with human alienation were Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, and, more recently, Karl Jaspers, who had all despaired over the "nothingness" (or selflessness) that yawns before men in materialistic, modern society (Fromm 1969:15-16). The Danish existentialist, for instance, spoke about godless man's essential dread at being dominated by an alien power which threatens his dissolution. And the despair about man's loss of self he called "sickness unto death." Nietzsche also triumphantly proclaimed the "death of the gods" so that man now wonders through an endless nothingness. Jaspers, on the other hand, has aptly said that the price man pays for progress is anxiety, "a dread of life unparalleled in its intensity." In such a situation, man feels himself to be nothing more than a lost point in empty space for all relationships seem to have no more than a temporary meaning.

Now, it will be interesting to consider the specific connotation Fromm gives to the concept of alienation. In *The Sane Society*, he writes:

By alienation is meant a mode of experience in which the person experiences himself as an alien. He has become, one might say, estranged from himself. He does not experience himself as the center of the world, as the creator of his own acts—but his acts and their consequences become his masters, whom he obeys, or whom he may even worship. The alienated person is out of touch with himself as he is out of touch with any other person. He, like the others, is experienced as things are experienced; with the senses and with common sense, but at the same time without being related to himself and to the world outside productively (1965:111; 1969:56).

This connotative meaning of alienation, admits Fromm, is, to a large extent, the same as that to which the prophets of the Old Testament referred as idolatry. As has been repeatedly explicated above, idolatry is always the worship of something into which man

### *The Emergence and Nature of Human Alienation*

has put his own creative powers. Instead of experiencing himself in his creative acts, he submits himself to idols created by himself. In this sense, man becomes alienated.

Furthermore, Fromm has expressed his intellectual indebtedness to Hegel and Marx concerning alienation.

I use "alienation" as it was used by Hegel and later by Marx: instead of experiencing his own human powers—e.g., love or wisdom, thought or reason, acting justly—a person transfers these powers to some idol, to force or forces outside himself. In order then to get in touch with his own human powers, he must submit completely to this idol (Evans 1966:88).

Thus, comparatively speaking, it will be enlightening if one also reflects in passing on the concepts of both Hegel and Marx. In the former's *Philosophy of History* (as quoted by Fromm), Hegel said: "What the spirit (or mind) really strives for is the realization of its notion; but in doing so it hides that goal from its own vision and is proud and well satisfied in this alienation from its own essence" (Fromm 1961:47). Moreover, Hegel wrote that the spirit (or the human mind) is at war with itself. As a result, it has to overcome itself as its most dreadful obstacle. And the peaceful development in nature is for the spirit (or mind) a severe, mighty conflict with itself (Fromm 1969:21-22). From this it becomes thus clear that Hegel saw alienation as a metaphysical problem. That is to say, as Fromm explains, man's intellectual creations, for Hegel, finally become independent of their creator, i.e., man, and hence alien to him. He considered the history of man a history of his alienation, and of his realization through the final conquest of this phenomenon. Human development is a dialectical process in which man can grow into higher phases only by overcoming the cultural forces he creates and by mastering himself.

Marx, on the contrary, was the first to describe the alienation process as a form of "reification" (Fromm 1969:21-22; 1961:75), i.e., converting an abstract concept into something real. In other words, Marx gave it a sociological frame of reference. Thus man's own deeds become an alien power reified and opposed to himself. What is worse is that this alien power enslaves man rather than



### *Alternative to A Dead God*

being controlled by him. For just as man becomes alienated in this manner, so his actions and his own energies have become estranged from himself. They stand above and against man, explains Fromm, and thus rule him rather than the contrary.

This brief sketch of Hegel's and Marx's notion of alienation, in Fromm's interpretation, shows that man's existence is alienated from his essence. Existentially, man is not what he potentially is. He is not what he ought to be, i.e., the master of himself and of his actions; rather, the opposite is true.

The meaning of alienation having been adumbrated, it will be enlightening to discuss its various forms as seen considerably by Fromm himself. Reflection here will be based primarily on these headings: alienation in relation to oneself; alienation in relation to another person; alienation in state or leader worship; alienation in man's relation with God; alienation of knowledge and in language; alienation in anonymous authority; and other forms of alienation.

#### *Alienation in Relation to Oneself*

This permeates the life of a person who worships the externalizations of his "irrational passions" (Fromm 1969:58; 1965:114). Such kind of person is mainly motivated by his lust for power and ceases to experience himself as a human being. He becomes a slave, a prisoner in himself. He is imprisoned in the exclusive pursuit of his passion for money, sex, power, drugs, or fame. They become his "idols" which he worships, hence, his actions and reason are not his own but are determined by such pursuits. While he is under the illusion that he is acting and thinking by himself, he is actually driven by forces distinct from himself. He thus becomes a stranger unto himself, just as he is alienated from his fellowmen. He experiences the other and himself no longer as what they really are but as distorted by such unconscious forces as wealth, sex, and fame which become his frames of orientation.

Accordingly, man becomes alone and isolated. He becomes an instrument in the hands of these forces outside himself. His strength and power he has transferred to them; hence, they are alienated from himself.

Similarly, in a capitalistic society, man, notes Fromm, aims at success in the market. His sense of value depends on his success, upon whether he can sell himself favorably. If he fails in this, he

### *The Emergence and Nature of Human Alienation*

feels he is a failure; if he succeeds, he is a success. Thus, man's sense of value depends on factors extraneous to himself. He is like all commodities that can be sold profitably on the market. In this way, man becomes a thing, hence alienated (Fromm 1956:105; 1969:70; 1942:103). It is the market which decides the value or "marketability" of a person's qualities, even his very existence.

#### *Alienation in Relationship with Another Person*

Here, the "idolized" is another person whom one worships and submits himself to (Fromm 1969:58). This happens most often in idolatrous love for a person. The loving person projects all his love, strength, and thought into the other. He experiences the loved person as a superior being, finding satisfaction in complete submission to him. In this situation, the loving person does not experience himself any longer as the bearer of his own powers. The loved person is experienced as a superior one to whom the loving person feels inferior, submissive, and passive. He has, thus, projected his self-identity into the other, and experiences his self no longer as his but as an alien from himself, rooted in the other. The latter becomes the idolized, deified master, while the loving person becomes the slave, the inferior being, thereby losing his individuality and independence, and worst of all, his freedom. He/she is resigned to become a martyr for the sake of the other.

#### *Alienation in State and Leader Worship*

Likewise, the same phenomenon exists in the worshipping submission to a political leader, to the state, or to one's own group, region, or race (Fromm 1969:58; Evans 1966:89). The leader and the state are, as it were, what they are by the consent of the governed. But "idols" or "gods" they become if the individual projects all his powers and freedom into them, worships them, hoping to regain some of his powers by submission. Thus, the individual believes in whatever his leader, state or social group believes. He thinks and reasons in terms of whatever is generally taught and thought or told him.

In this way, man has little sense of self, if at all, and little sense of creative power. He has a sense of his own creative powers only by worshipping symbols of the state, group, or leader to whom he has transferred his human power. For instance, the individual, inasmuch as his social feelings have been rooted in the state, is willing enough



### *Alternative to A Dead God*

to give his life for his country and fellowmen. And because he has made the state the embodiment of his social feelings, man is again alienated from himself. His wisdom, his power and courage are all vested, so to say, in his leaders; and he worships the latter as his idols (Fromm 1963:98).

To put the same thing in a different way, the individual acts and reasons in accordance with the orders of an authority (in this case, the state or the leader). He considers the authority as the possessor of the absolute judgment of right and wrong (Fromm [MH] 1967:145-55). Here, the individual is no longer the source of his own actions and decisions. In other words, a person, confirms Fromm, submits himself to the authority and "feels helpless, powerless, and weak at its mercy, strictness and cruelty" (Fromm [MH] 1967:148-55). He listens to the voice of an "internalized external authority," e.g., parents, state, or whoever the authorities in his culture happen to be. In effect, man no longer follows his own judgment, or conscience and reason, but that of the authority. Thus, he becomes a "thing" manipulable by his authority. Man, in this situation, is indeed alienated. He ceases to be himself.

Fromm says that external authorities such as the state, the church, public opinion, leaders or parents, are either consciously or unconsciously accepted as ethical and moral legislators whose laws, sanctions, and norms one adopts, thus internalizing them (hence his phrase "internalized external authority"); the laws and sanctions of these external authorities become part of oneself. They form what Fromm calls "authoritarian conscience," i.e., "the voice of an internalized external authority."

### *Human Alienation in God Worship*

This is the most crucial point in the entire book. One can see here the whole gamut of human alienation (as far as Fromm is concerned) in man's relation with God. In God worship, man projects all his powers of love and reason to God. He does not feel them any more as his. Ironically, man prays to God to give him back some of his projected powers. Feeling himself empty and impoverished, man puts his trust and his whole life in the grace or providence of God, hoping that the latter may return to him part of his own qualities which he has resigned into Him (Fromm 1969:58-59; Evans 1966:88-89).

### *The Emergence and Nature of Human Alienation*

It is clear, then, continues Fromm, that the God symbol is endowed with a human power, because man gives all his powers to this God. As man empties himself of his powers, he again tries to get in touch with them by worshipping or submitting to his God. And since it is asserted that God is invisible, not a thing, and nameless, man thus worships a *nameless nothing*. Put differently, precisely because man has delivered all of himself to God, a nameless nothing, he also becomes nothing. For the more man attributes himself to God, the less he has left in himself. And rather than sensing (or making use of) the infinite power of his reason and love within himself, man gives them all to God and makes himself shallow and empty. Then, he asks for them back, so to say, by making indulgences, contrition, prayers, or novenas.

Bitterly enough, laments Fromm, primarily because God becomes his idol and omnipotent superior, man *alienates* himself from himself. He also alienates himself from his fellowmen because he adores and loves his God, and hates, feels indifferent to, whoever does not worship Him just as much as he does. All the good and the evil, the right and the wrong, are seen from the point of view of his God—and never from that of his fellowmen, in their living situations in the world. Consequently, man becomes also alienated from his own world, principally because he envisions another world in union with his God. He ultimately forgets to realize an authentic life in this world in communion with his fellowmen.

### *Alienation of Knowledge and in Language*

Human knowledge can also become itself a commodity for sale. It can become a tool to produce results. This happens if knowledge is seen as an instrument to be used for better manipulation of others and of oneself, e.g., in market research, political propaganda, logistics, among others. The manipulation of others in these cases is euphemistically called concern for "human relations" (Fromm 1963:98). Actually, however, Fromm observes that it is the most *inhuman* relations as other people, due to such knowledgeable manipulations, have been adroitly deceived and reduced into automatons and abstractions.

In the realm of language, on the other hand, it often happens that as soon as a word is spoken, it assumes a life of its own (Fromm



### *Alternative to A Dead God*

1961:45; 1966:18). The word becomes a *reality*, i.e., it tends to substitute itself for the living experience for which the word stands. Fromm makes it clear that concepts have their own lives and that they grow and can be understood only if they are not separated from the human experiences which they express. If concepts become separated from the human experiences to which they refer, they become alienated and lose their value and are transformed into mere abstractions, or figments of the mind. And what is deceptive here is that a person may be using these concepts or abstractions which are believed to refer to some substratum of experience. Once this happens, according to Fromm, the concept expressing an experience has been converted into an ideology which usurps the place of the underlying experience within the living human person. Thus, history will become a history of ideologies rather than the history of concrete individual men who are the producers of their own concepts, ideas, or meanings.

For example, the concept of God has been transformed into a *reality* which man now believes to exist, whereas, in fact, it is nothing but a subjective datum which has become reified through the historical evolution of man.

### *Alienation in Anonymous Authority*

In this respect, alienation is seldom felt by the alienated person because of its invisible or *anonymous* nature (Fromm 1965:138-40; 1942:159-79). No one else makes a demand of anybody else, neither a person nor an idea, and not a moral law either. The authority involved here is an "It," in virtue of which Fromm speaks of an "It-authority." Here, the market, profit, economic necessities, common sense, public opinion, are the ones that make an individual act, feel, judge, and reason. This happens unconsciously on the part of man who submits himself to social *conformity*—the effective mechanism through which "It-authority" operates. To illustrate: I ought to do what every person does. I must conform, not be different. I must be willing to change according to the changes in the social pattern. Whether I am right or wrong, I must not ask. What is important is whether I am *adjusted* to the group. Only my readiness for change (just as change is demanded) is permanent

### *The Emergence and Nature of Human Alienation*

in me. Nobody has power over me, except the "herd," the group, of which I am a part and to which I am subjected.

For this reason, "It-authority" is likewise called "automaton conformity" (Fromm 1942:159-79; Evans 1966:23-24; [MH] 1967:148). Self-identity is dependent upon conformity. Loss of identity stems from feeling different. Feeling acceptable really means not being different from anybody else. Hence, I am not aware of submitting or rebelling. I am ruled unknowingly by an unknown power, in which case I am not myself but become "one," or a part, of the "It."

Usually, the "It" is pleasantly called "togetherness" (Fromm 1965:143), giving up oneself, one's principle and reason for the sake of unity in the group or flock. In this regard, the individual is under the illusion that it is he who thinks or decides, but, actually, the "It" thinks and decides for him. He thus becomes alienated. The "It" becomes his power of reason and love. He becomes an "automaton" (Fromm 1963:98).

Fromm's insight here is essentially related to the Filipino *pakikisama* (smooth personal relationship) social frame of reference, in which, because of one's desire not to offend the other members of his group (political or religious), he also follows their pattern of thinking, behaving, or reasoning, and joins the group in the pursuit of its goals or objectives (be they good or evil). Thus, this *pakikisama* becomes the "It-authority." This perhaps explains the so-called *sama-sama sa kasamaan* (doing evil together) with regard to the perpetration of widespread graft and corruption in both public and private domains of Philippine society.

### *Other Forms of Alienation*

Fromm also extends his notion of alienation process to the situations of both the employee and the employer. The employee, for instance, becomes, for Fromm, "an economic atom that dances to the tune of atomistic management" (Fromm 1969:60). As a result, the employee is bereft of his right to think and move freely. He cannot do anything he wants to do, except that which his manager tells him to do. Independent thought is being balked. This being the case, the employee will later develop indifference to his work; he feels destructive and lazy. The result will inevitably be uncreativity and "psychic regression." The manager, on the other hand, although running the whole enterprise and not a part of



### *Alternative to A Dead God*

it, is likewise alienated from his product. He experiences the latter as something useful, profitable, money-making. What he feels is no longer himself but a big income or profit. Worse enough, he is also alienated from the employee, for he manipulates the latter in view of the increase of profit and not in view of himself (employee) as a human being. The situation becomes even much worse in big enterprises and government administration, where the bureaucrats are the specialists in the administration of things and of men (Fromm 1969:61; 1965:116). Here, the relationship between the bureaucrats and the people is one of complete alienation because of the "bigness of the apparatus to be administered." In this way, the people (who are to be administered) become objects whom the bureaucrats consider completely impersonally, "neither with love nor with hate." What actually works is the human **process of manipulation**, as though people were figures or things. Love, for the manager, bureaucrat, and employee, has become the ability to **manipulate each other, to use one another**. They all become automatons. And as automatons do not love, neither do they care (Fromm 1963:100; 1965:89; 1969:89).

Fromm also notes alienation in consumption. People consume as they produce, he says, without any concrete relatedness to the objects with which they deal. They are surrounded by gadgets of whose nature and origin they know nothing, e.g., the telephone, radio, electricity, etc. (computers were not yet in vogue during Fromm's time). People know how to use them but not how they operate or function. Thus, men live in a world of things and their only connection with them is that they know how to manipulate and consume them (Fromm 1969:55,64-65). Men feel the illusion that they acquire things to consume; but, actually, it is men who are consumed. Men submit to them and do everything they can to buy and to possess them. As a result, men become **possessed by them**, thereby alienated from themselves.

Moreover, modern man is not only alienated from the work he does and from the things and pleasures he consumes. He becomes alienated from the social forces as well, which determine his society and the life of everybody living in it (Fromm 1969:67). To illustrate, economic depressions, demonstrations, wars and other kinds of violence seem to appear as if they were natural occurrences or calamities rather than what they really are, viz., happenings

### *The Emergence and Nature of Human Alienation*

perpetrated by man himself consciously or unconsciously. In other words, men are the producers of their economic problems and social arrangements (e.g., customs and institutions) but they decline responsibility and wait anxiously or **prayerfully** for what the future will bring. In short, while actions of men and the way they think and reason are embodied in the social patterns and conventional laws or principles which govern them, they (the laws) are above men because the latter let themselves determined by the former. In effect, men become the slaves of the laws they themselves have created.

True, asserts Fromm, man builds a social order, convention, habits and ideologies, which help him live harmoniously with his fellowmen. But such a man-made world (i.e., artificial world) should not be superimposed on the natural world in which we live. For in this superimposition, man will inevitably lose his touch with himself and the world. What man can see is only the routine in life, the artifacts of living; and he cannot see any longer the real world. He becomes thus alienated from it (Fromm 1969:71).

The artificial world also includes the manipulation of machines (hi-technology). Modern man has become a part of the machine, rather than its master. What aggravates the situation is that man has become so much interested in technology that he has forgotten his natural participation in, and response to life. He has "hypostatized" production to which life is subordinated (Fromm 1965:309), e.g., profit is to be upheld at the expense of the poor consumers.

In a so-called democratic election process, alienation, observes Fromm, is also prominent (Fromm 1965:170). A person votes and is again under the illusion that he is the maker of his choices or decisions. In reality, however, they are largely determined by forces beyond his control, e.g., political manipulations or propaganda, logistics, bribery, among others. Hence, in this case, man makes his choice not by himself but virtually dictated by others (in a Philippine setting, by **guns, gold, and goons**).

Amidst all these, man concentrates his power and energy in "hope," in the "future," forgetting to live in the present. In effect, the future is apparently transformed into a "goddess" whom man envisions, and to whom man submits and worships (Fromm 1966:154). The future becomes his life as he lives in the future through hope. Consequently, man again becomes alienated from the present and from himself. In Filipino experience, *nabubuhay*

### *Alternative to A Dead God*

na lamang siya sa pag-asa (he lives in hope) hence, the common saying, *habang may buhay ay may pag-asa* (while there is life, there is hope).

It is interesting to note that Fromm's position in this regard is similar to that taken by Robert O. Johann, who writes: "For modern man, work and life are an uninterrupted anticipation of tomorrow. He is forever expecting, looking forward to, a better day.... What is the result? For one thing modern man has lost his 'feel' for the present and with it his capacity for leisure. He is forever in a state of tension. Divided between what is and what will be, he lacks a sense of wholeness. Life for him means simply being further down the road tomorrow than today, and the consequence has been to chain him to the wheel of 'progress'" (Johann 1962:554).

Fromm explains that the "paradox of hope" is one of faith, not passiveness. Such faith will never be possible in a spectator who simply "waits and sees" what will happen. It is possible only for one who works for his goal, and directs all his energy towards it, and lives his life while working for it. "Hope," in his view, "is paradoxical. It is neither passive waiting nor is it unrealistic forcing of circumstances that cannot occur.... To hope means to be ready at every moment for that which is not yet born, and yet not become desperate if there is no birth in our lifetime. There is no sense in hoping for that which already exists or for that which cannot be" (Fromm 1968:9-25).

It will be illuminating to conclude this long section by way of summarizing the major insights thus far discussed. Of the several ways whereby man tries to relate himself to others so as to satisfy his need for transcendence, the various forms of alienation just explored are all attempts to become one with himself and the world (viz., by submission to one's selfishness, to another person, to an idol, to one's group or race, to an institution, to a leader or a God). In this way, according to Fromm, man is deceived by the belief that he transcends the separateness of his individual existence by becoming possessed, or a part of another person or some being more powerful than himself. He experiences his identity in dependence upon God, for instance, to whom he submits himself. Likewise, he feels his sense of self by creating conventional laws, principles, and by manufacturing machines. He discovers himself by conforming to the group and by his ability to manipulate his fellowmen.

### *The Emergence and Nature of Human Alienation*

Actually, however, in all the ways in which man tries to satisfy his need for some frame of reference, he is being alienated from himself, from his fellows and from the world. For, in effect, man worships his own concept, institutions, leader, or conventions of his own making. He is then unable to love and to use his reason. Alienated, in the sense that Fromm defines the term, man does not experience himself any longer as the center of his world, as the creator of his own acts, but his acts and their consequences become his masters, whom he obeys and even worships. Thus, he is out of touch with himself as well as with others. He is owned by his own creations.

### **Man's Loss of Selfhood and Escape from Freedom**

The problem of alienation in connection with man's selfhood has metaphysical implications, as Fromm himself has emphatically stressed. For alienation understood as man's loss of self-identity is intimately bound up with one's search for existential meaning: "Who am I?" (Fromm 1969:16; 1965:62; 1966:70). Undoubtedly, the entire history of man (which is also the history of alienation) is essentially characterized by his search for personhood, for what man truly is. But in this quest, man has instead lost his identity, his uniqueness and individuality. Thus, the central problem of alienation is the idea that man has lost track of what he is searching for. A reflection upon the whole range of his existential search will disclose this fact.

It has been shown that precisely on account of his inner need for a frame of orientation, man affirms and worships a God. In Him, man asserts himself; and in Him, through Him, and with Him, his existence acquires a meaning. But just as God is conceived as omniscient and omnipotent, man is conceived as powerless and insignificant, i.e., he is nothing. Only as he can gain grace or blessings from God by complete surrender, can man feel strong (Fromm [PR] 1967:35-37). In this act of surrender, he loses his independence and integrity as an individual, although he obtains the feeling of being protected by God's eternal power.

On account of this belief, explains Fromm, the "Father" in heaven becomes the object of prayer, or of worship. He is given so much value that the life and happiness of man living here and now



may be sacrificed. Man's worth consists in the very denial of his own worth and strength. And this God, observes Fromm, "justifies every means and becomes the symbol in the name of whom religious and secular elites control the lives of their fellowmen" (Fromm [PR] 1967:36; 1942:147; 1966:227; emphasis supplied).

What is most deplorable, says Fromm, is that God has become the possessor of what was originally man's: his reason and love. The more perfectly conceived his God becomes, the more imperfect man turns out to be. For man has projected the best he has onto God and thus impoverishes himself. God becomes all-loving, all-wise, and all-just; and man is deprived ultimately of all these qualities. Indeed, he becomes empty and poor. All his human powers have been transferred to God. Thus, in such an alienated situation, any so-called human activity is possible in the name of God. That is, one's life, one's destiny, is in the "will of the Lord" (Fromm 1942:147-148). Man thus submits his own will to God; he does nothing, feels and thinks nothing, which is not something related to the Lord. From the Lord, he expects protection, and wishes to be taken by Him. The alienated man, then, for Fromm, does not think or act by himself. He always refers to his God. His spontaneous activity is an alien activity of God upon him. It is, in effect, God's own activity and a loss of man's own spontaneity.

Oftentimes, man considers God as a "Magic Helper" (Fromm 1942:150-51). And in order not to lose Him and to make Him do what one wants (even to make Him responsible for what one should be answerable for), man fervently adores and prays to Him night and day, or sacrifices his own life in devotion to Him. In most cases, writes Fromm, man in his attempt to "manipulate" or call God's attention, often indulges himself in grim, reckless self-immolation or self-sacrifice (in Filipino experience, having oneself nailed to the cross and/or flagellating oneself on Good Friday).

From all this, says Fromm, it becomes annoyingly clear that as man projects his own valuable powers onto God, such very powers become separated from him, hence alienated from himself. Everything he has is now God's. Nothing is left to him, so that his only access to himself is through God. By adoring and loving God, man tries to regain the touch with himself which he had lost through projection. But having lost his own self, he is completely at God's mercy. He feels he has grievously sinned against God,

once he asserts himself and denies God (Fromm [PR] 1967:49-50). It is only through God's mercy or blessings that he feels he can regain what makes him human; hence, he feels obliged to go to church to worship Him for fear of His wrath.

Thus, in Fromm's perception, man's alienation from his powers in God-worship not only makes him feel slavishly dependent upon Him; it makes him bad and a sinner as well. Man becomes a being without faith in himself and in his fellow men, i.e., without experience of his own love, of his own power and reason. As a result, hostility between those who believe in God and those who do not, will arise. God has thus created man's unconcern for man. And the more man becomes faithful to God, the more he remains unfaithful to his fellowmen. The more he adores his God, the less he recognizes the good for himself and for others in this world. This painful situation is indeed the "fall" of man, notes Fromm (Fromm [PR] 1967:50-51).

Of course, no one can by any means deny that man is dependent, Fromm clarifies. To death, old age, and illness, every individual remains subject, even if he were to control nature and make it serviceable to him. But it is one thing to recognize one's dependence, he argues, and it is entirely different to indulge in the worship of some unknown power on which one depends. True, to understand realistically how limited our power is, is an essential part of wisdom and maturity; but to worship it, to lose oneself to an invisible Lord, is self-destructive. "The one is humility, the other is self-humiliation" (Fromm [PR] 1967:52).

To worship some powers foreign to man, in Fromm's view, is to shift the center of one's life to powers over which one feels no control, thus escaping from freedom and personal responsibility. It is an explicit desire to give up one's own will and to experience submission under a leader or unknown being as profoundly rewarding. But in such an alienated condition, man can no longer say "I am," for he ultimately loses selfhood. Fromm has aptly put this in saying:

If I am only a puppet, if I have no convictions, if I have no authentic feelings—then, indeed I cannot say "I" and I must hide myself behind a mask or an idol. Then I have a sense of identity only through worship of the idol, whatever the idol may be (Evans 1966:29).

It seems that this is another instance of a paradox inherent in man's existence. In his desire to be related so as to overcome his separateness and powerlessness, the price which man pays by submitting himself to a God is high: the loss of self (Fromm 1942:160,178). And this situation again leaves him in an intense state of insecurity. His selflessness has thus exacerbated his feeling of helplessness and unsafeness, since he has ceased to be himself.

And what is most disheartening is that man, in surrendering himself to God, has given up his own freedom and is driven in bondage (Fromm 1942:121,122,221). He has, in a sense, escaped from his freedom, but this escape does not make him secure and certain either. He has ceased to assert himself, to do what he wants. He simply submits to the alleged orders or will of God. He ceases to experience himself as an "I." In this case, says Fromm, "man is dead" (Fromm 1966:228; 1965:312-13; 1963:101) and God is born.

Summing up, man feels "free," to some extent, by tying himself up to a God. Actually, however, as Fromm maintains, he has lost himself and has escaped from his freedom and responsibility to develop himself by himself. It is now appropriate to present next what Fromm means by man's concept of God.

### **The Historically Conditioned Concept of God**

Human evolution, in Fromm's mind, can be characterized as the emergence of man from nature, from the bonds of blood and soil. In the beginning of human history, man clung to, and found security in, these primary bonds. By holding on to them, he felt secure and certain. Thus he felt identified with the world of animals, trees, and inorganic materials; and he worshipped not a few of them as gods (Fromm 1956:63; 1965:307).

Later in his stage of development, man transformed the products of his own hands into idols. This was the stage of idol worship. He projected his own powers and skills into the figures he made out of clay, gold, or some special kind of stones. And, then, after an arduous and long period of slow evolution, he gave his idols the configuration of human beings. He also created a new social and religious order in which he worshipped such human-like figures of gods and goddesses.

In the historical phase of anthropomorphic god worship, expounds Fromm, one finds two dimensions of development: the female and male concept of the gods and the degree of mental maturity which man then achieved in determining the nature of his gods (Fromm 1956:66). In the matriarchal concept, the highest being was the mother: the goddess which was the object of worship and devotion. In the next stage of deistic evolution, the father became the supreme being. This was at the time of the patriarchal society. And until today, the **Father God** is still considered the One authoritative.

The difference between the mother-concept and father-concept of gods, explains Fromm, also enlightens us about the character of the love man bestowed upon them. For instance, the mother-centered concept of god understands God as an unconditionally loving mother. Her love is all-embracing and she is willing to forgive her creature man, just as much as a true human mother does to her child who has done her wrong. In the same manner, the father-centered notion of god conceives the latter like a father, "who is assumed to be strict and just, punishes and rewards (man) as he deserves."

Clearly enough, the evolution of the human race, permeated with the father-and-mother-centered structure of worship, took place simultaneously with man's maturing love in connection with the kind of worship at a given period. For example, in the beginning of this development, God was conceived to be despotic and jealous. Man was God's property which could be disposed of as He wished. Then from the figure of a despotic God came the concept of Him as a loving father who stands for justice, truth and love. God then is truth, love, and justice. And in this development, God has ceased to be a man, a person, a father. He becomes, as the believer today claims, the principle of unity behind the manifold phenomena. This maturing idea of God becomes what is now known in monotheistic theology as the **One**, the nameless "Thou," the ground of all beings (Fromm 1956:68). This will later be compared with Dewart's insight about absolute theism (ch. iv, sec. 6, *infra*).

For many years this **One** has been the guarantee of security and certainty. Omniscient and omnipotent, God is conceived to have created the world, all because of His infinite goodness. He is the harbinger of "the truth, the way, and the life." And the Church, says Fromm, has interpreted this in details; hence, man feels secure



### *Alternative to A Dead God*

in the Church by following her rules, believing that whatever happens, he is "on the way to salvation and to eternal life in heaven" (1968:49-50). That there is no greater source of certainty than God is the truth for man.

The preceding historical explication of the emergence of the God concept in conjunction with the growth of man's self-awareness has considerably influenced Fromm's mind. In *You Shall be as Gods*, he puts it most emphatically:

I believe that the concept of God was a historically conditioned expression of an inner experience. I can understand what the Bible or genuinely religious persons mean when they talk about God, but I do not share their thought concept ... I believe that the concept 'God' was conditioned by the presence of a socio-political structure in which tribal chiefs or kings have supreme power. The supreme value is conceptualized as analogous to the supreme power in society (1966:18-19).

Taken as such, "God," for Fromm, is nothing but "one of the different poetic expressions and the highest value in humanism, not a reality in itself" (Fromm 1966:18). And again in *The Art of Loving*, he says:

I want to make it clear that I myself do not think in terms of a theistic concept, and that to me the concept of God is only a historically conditioned one, in which man has expressed his experience of his higher powers, his longing for truth and unity at a given historical period (1956:72).

Fromm's insight is self-explanatory. He explains further that whenever a person says "I believe in God," one might ask where he acquired that idea, what the development of his belief is, and how he shows it. In doing so, one might come to the conclusion that, perhaps, this is the most meaningful affirmation he could say, or that "it is nothing but a cliché because he happened to be born in a certain environment and the most convenient thing to do is to repeat what everyone else says" (Evans 1966:90-91). From this it becomes explicit that belief in God, for Fromm, is not only historical

### *The Emergence and Nature of Human Alienation*

but situational and acquired. A believer happens to be born and to live in a given social situation that affirms the existence of God.

Fromm also traces this phenomenon of belief in man's symbol- and concept-building capacity. Man invents symbols and creates concepts to express his experiences, in order to be able to communicate them to others. But the great disadvantage of conceptualization is that it can lead man to hypostatization or ideologization. Hence, inasmuch as man conceives of a God, this God concept has been hypostatized and reified (Fromm 1966:19-20) over the years.

Another fact contributing to the process of hypostatization (hence, alienation) is man's desire for completeness, according to Fromm. Man strives for systematization and wholeness in view of the precarious nature of his existence. To illustrate, when man knows some fragments of reality, he wants to complete them in order to make them sensible in a systematic way. But insofar as the very nature of the limitations of his mind enables him to grasp only fragmentary knowledge however much he tries to understand the whole of reality, man tends "to manufacture" some additional pieces to make his knowledge into a whole system (Fromm 1966:19-20). Thus, to understand reality as a whole, man does not infrequently add the concept of a God, as the ground of whatever exists, to his limited grasp of the world so as to make it complete.

To further clarify Fromm's point: at the time when man had only a fragmentary knowledge of the ways and means to solve his existential problems, he sensed that he could not find any harmony by progressing to the full development of his powers. His alternative, elucidates Fromm, was to affirm the existence of some supreme value or power, and he conceptualized it in various names: Brahman, Tao, Allah, Yahweh, Nirvana, and God (Fromm 1966:19-20; 1964:119). The nature of these different concepts depended on the economic, social, and political structures of the respective cultures and social classes, and on the thought patterns permeating them. And then the concept of the supreme good was converted into an "absolute," or the Almighty God.

Hence, as far as Fromm is concerned, the concept of God has its own life and evolution corresponding to the evolution of man within a span of many years. There is a common element of experience referred to by the God concept, but there is also a

constant change occurring in this experience, i.e., in the meaning of the concept. What is common though, for Fromm, is the idea that neither nature nor the artifacts of life constitute the ultimate reality. Only the One represents the supreme value, the supreme goal and good for man (Fromm 1966:21).

In the light of all these considerations, Fromm makes it clear that "(he is) not a theist" (Fromm 1966:7). "I am not a theist," he stresses. He defines his position as "nontheistic mysticism." He emphasizes, however, that "there need be no quarrel with those who retain the symbol God, although it is questionable whether it is not a forced attempt to retain a symbol whose significance is essentially historical" (Fromm [PR] 1967:111). The real conflict, says he, is not between belief in God and "atheism" but "between a humanistic, realistic attitude and an attitude which is equivalent to idolatry" (Fromm [PR] 1967:111) regardless of how this attitude is expressed, or disguised, in conscious thought.

The foregoing paragraphs have thus far indicated what Fromm really means by "a historically conditioned concept of God." The following will show that the God concept, which has acquired existential meaning for man throughout the years of his historical evolution, is the symbol of man's self which he tries to realize in his life.

### **God as the Symbol of Man's Power**

It has been pointed out earlier that in his determined attempt to solve the unbearable anxiety that permeates his whole being and to satisfy those practical needs which he himself cannot adequately provide for, man has turned to God. The latter, for man, has become a symbol in which he has expressed the totality of that which he is striving for, viz., love, truth, and justice. He has developed faith in the principles which his concept of God represents. He thinks of truth, lives love and justice, and considers his entire life valuable only inasmuch as it gives the chance to arrive at an ever fuller unfolding in God's love. God thus becomes the object of man's "ultimate concern"; and to love the former is to long for the attainment of one's capacity to love, "for the realization of that which the God concept stands for in oneself" (Fromm 1956:71).

Man also conceives God as a symbol of power and force. Precisely because he is all-powerful, God is supreme, while man is utterly powerless. Actually, however, clarifies Fromm, "God is but a symbol of man's powers which he tries to realize in his life, and is not a symbol of force and domination, having power over man" (Fromm [PR] 1967:35-37). Hence, man's aim is not to achieve the greatest powerlessness but the greatest strength. And "God is the image of man's higher self, a symbol of what man potentially is or ought to become" (Fromm [PR] 1967:48; emphasis supplied). Accordingly, God is never to be taken as a symbol of power over man but of man's own powers.

In his struggle for unity and quest for transcendence, man in Fromm's view, attaches himself faithfully and obediently to God until such a mature stage as God ceases to be an outside transcendent power. That will be the time when man shall have finally incorporated all the principles of love, truth, and justice unto himself; when he has ultimately become one with God; when he will reach the point where he speaks of God "only in a poetic, symbolic sense" (Fromm 1956:81).

Thus, the more man understands and masters himself and nature, the less he needs to subscribe to God as an explanation, power, love, or as a "magic helper," for controlling nature, according to Fromm. If and when man will have been able to produce enough to feed and nourish all men, he will have no need to invoke God. Man can then provide for himself and by himself what God supposedly does (Fromm [PR] 1967:101; 1966:52; 1968:89). And by that time, the concept of God would just be a mere poetic symbol for man's full realization, for his freedom of openness to the world. In short, Fromm says that once man has fully actualized himself and has achieved universal solidarity and peace, God worship is no longer necessary.

Consequently, Fromm asserts that the problem of God is really the problem of man (Fromm [PR] 1967:109-110). No power transcending him can make a moral claim upon him. For gaining or losing his own life in the world, he is responsible to himself. Only if he acknowledges this fact can he return to, and save, himself; if not, he will ultimately perish. And no one else can help him but himself (Fromm [MH] 1967:174).

Enough has been said about human alienation in man's relation with God. And Fromm's assertion about the concept of God as the



### *Alternative to A Dead God*

embodiment of man's own powers which only he can realize has just been explained. The next section will examine the remaining alternative which Fromm proposes to resolve the problem of human self-estrangement.

### **Fromm's Alternative to God**

The early sections of this chapter have shown man's self-annihilation in his relationship with an idolized God. Before his Lord, he becomes alienated from himself. Man does not think and act by himself any longer, according to Fromm, but always refers to his heavenly Father for direction and guidance, by invoking the latter's providential blessings. Man always lives in fear of God otherwise he would be estranged from Him. So he has to resign himself and consign all his power and love to his all-good God. In short, by losing himself to God, man feels he finds himself; he becomes truly himself.

Fromm, on the contrary, regards human resignation to God as an escape from freedom and a loss of self-identity. The true solution to human existence, he dares, should not be sought in blind obedience to a God. It must lie in a new vision that enables man to feel again at home in the world and to overcome his boredom. And this, man can achieve by the full growth of his human powers, especially "his capacity to love, to use his reason, to create and enjoy beauty, and to share his humanity with all his fellowmen" (Fromm 1968:69-70; 1956:125; emphasis supplied). The only way in which man can satisfy his need to relate himself to his fellows, to unite himself with the world, and to acquire at the same time a sense of personhood and individuality, is through love (Fromm 1965:36-37). And only if man accepts his supreme role as the creator of himself is he able to love. Only if he realizes that he owes his existence to nobody else but to himself can man be able to grow in love. He must realize that "his life rests with himself; it rests upon his courage to be himself and for himself" (Fromm [MH] 1967:250-51).

Furthermore, because man is man, Fromm stresses, he is in need of man and of the world. His need is specifically human, hence, he must not look for an answer in a God outside of himself (Fromm 1968:72). Man is the "measure of all things," i.e., all his judgments,

### *The Emergence and Nature of Human Alienation*

decisions, and perceptions are rooted in the peculiarities of his thrown existence, and thus meaningful only with reference to it. "There is nothing higher and nothing more dignified than human existence" (Fromm [MH] 1967:23). This is the nucleus of Fromm's humanistic philosophy.

Man's love for man, then, is the only alternative left for men, insists Fromm. Through love, men experience human solidarity with their fellowmen. It is a union with other human beings while retaining men's uniqueness and integrity as individuals (Fromm 1965:37-38). Men experience a sharing of being, an *unalienated* communion in their loving each other, which thus allows the full unfolding of their real selves as persons. It enables men to transcend their individualized existence and simultaneously to experience themselves as the bearers of their active powers which constitute the act of loving.

In the act of loving one another, men are one with all, and yet they remain themselves as unique, distinct and limited as they really are. In this sense, love is not limited to only one person, otherwise man is alienated from the others. Rather, to love a person is to love in him "all of humanity," (Fromm 1956:37-38), i.e., all that he as a human being represents and stands for. For instance, in loving the other person, I also love all persons including myself. In this way, no man is alienated from himself nor from others. For as he relates himself to others through love, he becomes one with all and at the same time remains himself. In short, I love in you also myself as you love in me yourself, too; and just as much as I remain "I" in loving you, so much as you remain "you" in loving me. And in our interrelatedness in the name of love, we both become one as we are one with all other humans we stand for.

Fromm further illustrates how one can disseminate human love in various realms of life. In the realm of thought, for instance, love is expressed in the proper and an open grasp of the world by reason; in the sphere of productive activity and unalienated work, it finds its expression in one's feeling of self-development or self-unfolding; and in the realm of feeling, love is felt in the experience of oneness with other persons, with all men and with the world, under the condition of retaining one's sense of independence and integrity.

It will be interesting to elucidate how love, in Fromm's interpretation, is expressed in human creative activity. In creative

human labor (in which work is not a compulsive activity in order to escape aloneness, nor a relationship to nature which is partly one of dominating her and partly one of worship of, and enslavement by the products of man's hand) the blending of love and work becomes such a creative activity that enables man to be one with nature, while remaining himself, in the very act of creation (productive work). This kind of work affirms the individuality of one's self and at the same time unites the latter with other men and nature. For this reason, the individual self assumes a higher level (Fromm 1942:225). Thus, in all spontaneous human activity performed in and through love, man embraces the world, and the self remains intact and becomes stronger; for the self is as strong as it is dynamic.

Thus, to get rid of alienation in work, love must become the foremost component of human creativity, not love as the dissolution of the self in another person nor as the instrument or possession of another person, but love as the spontaneous affirmation of other selves, as the union of man with other men on the basis of the preservation of the self.

Alienation, in Fromm's view, may also be taken as the failure of love, and of any kind of relationships, for that matter. Such a failure is intimately bound up with self-centeredness, in which a person simply relates himself to himself. He thinks there is only one reality, i.e., his own thought processes, feelings or needs. In such a situation, he fails to experience reality, that is, human reality as such; hence, alienated (Fromm 1965:39-41).

Let it be understood, however, that love, for Fromm, is not some powerful phenomenon transcending man. Love is inherent in man and radiates from him. It is not a higher power which claims upon man, nor a duty imposed on him. Rather, love is man's own power by which he can relate himself to the world and makes it truly his. Man's power of love, then enables him to be in harmony with all men and the world. By loving and comprehending (through love and reason), he can be productively related to them. Accordingly, only to the extent that man develops his reason and love can he experience the natural and social world in a human way. He can feel at home in the world and secure in himself only in proportion to the extent that he has mastered life. And only in the measure in which man grasps reality can he make this world his. If he thrives in illusions, man can never change the conditions

which make such illusions arise (Fromm [MH] 1967:23-24; 1965:68,71; 1964:52-53). If he cannot develop his power of reason and his capacity for love, he cannot bear the burden of freedom and responsibility. Finally, if man has no sense of freedom and responsibility, he ceases to be human.

Furthermore, Fromm advocates an epistemology of man through the act of love (Fromm 1963:195-97; 1956:29-31). He professes that love is an active penetration of the other person in which the desire to know is stilled by union (not necessarily sexual). In the very act of communion in love, explains Fromm, I know you as you; I likewise know myself; I know both of us, I know everybody. Put differently, I find myself, I discover both the other and myself, and I discover man. We know ourselves in the experience of union and not in any way that our thoughts or concepts can give. Thus, knowing man lies in the very act of loving him in which words or concepts are transcended. We know each other as we plunge into each other's "whoness" in love. I cannot know the other through force of power, for this will just widen the distance between him and myself. To know the other through threat or fear is to control him, to make him my possession, my property, hence, to transform him into a thing manipulable and usable by me.

Man in his human dimensions, avers Fromm, is an unfathomable secret unto himself. Paradoxically, we know and do not know ourselves at the same time (Fromm 1963:186; 1956:29-31). This truism lies in the fact that we are not mere things or objects which are conceptualizable. The further we get into the depth of our being, the more elusive our knowledge of ourselves becomes. For this reason, Fromm characterizes our knowledge of man as negative (Fromm 1963:181-82,193,197). As full knowledge of man by concepts or thoughts is not possible, the only knowledge we have of him is what he is not. For the more I know about what man is not, the better I know about him.

To develop this, Fromm explains that man is not a thing which can be dissected without being destroyed. Man, unlike a thing, cannot be manipulated without being harmed; he cannot be produced artificially as he cannot be taken apart and put together again; whereas a thing can be; it is predictable. Man is not. While he can create, a thing cannot; and as he is not selfless, a thing is. And most of all, man can say "I."



Putting the same thing in a different way, I cannot know man by detaching myself from him, as I cannot study him in the same way as I study a thing. Knowledge of man, as Fromm claims, is possible only in the process of relating ourselves to him. This means that we can know something about man if and only if we relate ourselves to man through the act of loving (Fromm 1963:182-84). Knowledge about another human being is indeed ineffable, and only in an attitude of loving relatedness can we understand anybody.

A more detailed reflection on the universal implication of the act of loving will be enlightening. Fromm claims that love is based on knowledge of the other and all knowledge of the other is based on shared experience. This insight grounds Fromm's philosophy of humanistic love which can be illustrated thus: I cannot understand in another person that which I do not experience in myself. For to be myself, that is to say, to be human, means that I carry within myself all of humanity, hence all men (as has been seen earlier in this section). Thus if I fail to discover or consider the other, or the stranger, as being human, I know myself only in a limited manner, perhaps only as a social man. And only by knowing the heart of the stranger do I see, behind the social screen which hides me from myself as a human being, the universal humanness which the stranger and I both share. In this shared humanity, I discover myself as a universal man. And as a universal human being, I also discover the stranger within myself. Hence, "I cannot hate him outside of myself, because he has ceased to be a stranger to me" (Fromm 1966:184-85; 1964:88-89). In other words, if the stranger is the stranger within me, the enemy is also the enemy within me. As such, he is no longer the stranger nor the enemy, because he is "I," Fromm writes.

What Fromm means in this respect becomes explicit in what follows: If I look at the stranger from the outside, he is indeed a stranger to me and becomes the "object" of my concern. In a sense, he appears as a "thing" of my interest, in which case I cannot know him as he really is. On the other hand, if I experience him within myself insofar as he is a part of my being human, I do also experience what he experiences, says Fromm. In this phenomenon of shared experience, I feel related to him as he is to me. And this interrelatedness, he clarifies, is not from the "I" to the "thou" but one which is expressed in the phrase: "I am thou" (Fromm 1964:88-

89; 1968:82-83). In this case, I experience in myself that which is experienced by the other person; hence in this mutual experience he and I are one. It is precisely on account of this that all knowledge of another person is real knowledge only if it is based on my experiencing within myself what the other person experiences. Otherwise, he remains a thing, an object, in which case I may know a lot about him but I do not really know him.

In view of the foregoing considerations, Fromm wants to avoid as much as possible the use of the "I-thou" expression of man's interrelatedness. He prefers the "I-am-thou" phrase to emphasize the dimension of shared experience where a complete openness to the other and openness within myself are involved. In the "I-thou" phrase, the implication may be that "I" am directed to the "thou" which, as the phrase "directed to" implies, seems to appear as an alien, as a stranger to me. For this apparent implication, Fromm stresses the "I-am-thou" relationship. This is the only way a person can become truly human. Since there is nothing in another person which we cannot feel as a part of ourselves, we carry within ourselves all of humanity. Nothing human is alien to ourselves; hence, it is only in the "I-am-you" experience that one can understand another human being because both share the same dimensions of human existence, i.e., the human condition (Fromm 1964:93).

There is another important dimension which our knowing each other through love implies. According to Fromm, to know ourselves and others in this way means to overcome the many illusions and biases we have about ourselves and other people. We are able to do away with the many evils that mask us and which make it impossible to know one another clearly. To become truly related to others through love, we have to get rid of all distortions, veils, and phantasies about ourselves and our fellowmen. "We have to undo one illusion after another, and free our way to the decisive act which we alone can perform: the courage to be, the jump, the act of commitment" (Fromm 1968:83; 1956:31; 1963:194-95,198). To put it more graphically, knowing man authentically requires that we rid ourselves of the restricting ties of our own group (religious or political), society, race, or culture. We instead penetrate to the depth of that reality in which "we are all nothing but human" (Fromm 1968:83).

### *Alternative to A Dead God*

From all these considerations, Fromm recapitulates that in order to obvert alienation, "thingification" (Fromm 1963:185-86), or the transformation of man into a thing, we have to see the other person in the act of love, "in the act of empathy, in the act of seeing him man to man." Instead of seeing him as an object, we must see the other in the act of shared experience. In this way, we become aware of him as he really is (not as we think of him to be), hence, we can respond to his reality. Only in this way, stresses Fromm, can man arrive again at a new sense of "I-ness," of an experience of "I am" (Fromm 1963:185-86).

Finally, in order for love for man as man to develop there must be, for Fromm, "security, justice, and freedom" (Fromm 1964:52-53). There must be security so that the material conditions for a dignified life are not threatened; justice, in order that no man can be a means for the pursuits of others; and freedom, so that every man may have the opportunity to realize himself and to become an active and responsible member of his society. In other words, there must be freedom to create, to inquire, and to venture. For freedom becomes real only through human creativity, love, and responsibility. To be creative in love is the only way man can become aware of what he really is; it is the only way "he can give full birth to man, to be fully himself, to be fully human" (Fromm 1963:185-86).

And insofar as man can become truly himself in creative love, so far will he be able to experience human happiness, which consists in man's oneness with all his fellowmen. Man's happiness ultimately rests with his inner loving activity and the experience of the increasing vital energy which occurs in creative relatedness to others, to the world, and himself. It will be his experience of productive living and the active use of his powers of reason and love which unite him with the human world (Fromm 1965:179). Happiness, says Fromm, cannot be found in the state of inner passivity. "Happiness is the experience of fullness, not emptiness which needs to be filled." It consists, then, in being creatively alive and dynamic.

Summing up Fromm's major insights, love alone (in which man is able to relate himself to others and yet remains truly himself at the same time) is the solution to human alienation. Man must look for the answer to his existential problem within himself and not outside of himself. The only answer (which is human love) does not come from a God but from man himself. Through

### *The Emergence and Nature of Human Alienation*

his loving relatedness to others, man can better understand himself in particular, and man, in general. Thus, only man's loving concern for man can quench his thirst for transcendence. Only creative love can make man happy, as far as Fromm is concerned. This is attainable as soon as human security, justice, and freedom shall have been won for man.

### **Conclusion**

This long chapter has been devoted mainly to the historical emergence of the phenomenon of human alienation. It has traced the latter's first unfolding in idol worship as man's one way of satiating his need for relatedness. It has likewise shown the meaning of alienation as man's loss of self-identity and escape from freedom. The historically conditioned concept of God has been pointed out as the historical embodiment of man's own powers which he has been trying to realize in his existence. And lastly, Fromm's principle of universal love (as the only alternative left for man to solve his alienated condition) has also been enunciated.



upon himself. He can restructure and redesign the conditions which promote the good of his life and can bring its full realization.

In recapitulation, man realizes himself by creative activity and productive involvement in the world. In this way, he and the world become coexistents, according to Fromm. He ceases to doubt about himself as he now is the creator. He now feels secure and this security is not rooted in some higher power outside of himself, but is a result of man's creativeness. His security is not based on protection coming from God, but on his dynamism (Fromm 1942:226-28,233). It is the security acquired each moment of spontaneous activity; it is the security that freedom alone can give, which is free from illusions because it has eliminated the conditions that necessitate illusions. In short, it is the security which man experiences in positive freedom or "freedom to," in the full affirmation of the self. This positive freedom, for Fromm, implies that there is no higher power than man's unique individual self, as he is the center and purpose of his life. For this reason, his growth and realization is an end that can never be subordinated to purposes which are supposed to have greater dignity.

This, for Fromm, will be man's existential situation when he shall have become one with nature, with his fellowmen, and with himself. It will be the full realization of his potentialities, together with his ability to live dynamically and spontaneously. For then man shall have already become the creator of himself. Reflection will now be shifted to the state of full human development towards which, in Fromm's view, man is tending.

### **The Messianic Concept of Human Emancipation**

The preceding sections have shown that man creates himself as he designs his own history. In fact, human existence for Fromm is history in the making. He firmly believes that human history culminates ultimately in the end of existential strife and conflict, and a new history of harmony and union will begin. Man can attain the latter stage when he shall have reached the goal of having a full grasp of the world by his own power of reason and love; when he has fully grown in self-awareness, in truth, love, and justice; when he has given full birth to himself through the dialectical process of self-creation (Fromm 1963:207-08,212).

This section will be devoted primarily to what Fromm visualizes as the "end of days," the "eschaton," or the "messianic time," which, for him, is the aim of history (Fromm 1965:206). His reflection on this takes two points of direction, although he is more inclined towards one of them. First, Fromm connects the biblical myth of Adam and Eve with the concept of salvation. His insight here is that originally man was one with nature. There was no conflict whatsoever between him and the latter, or between man and woman. Man still lacked the most essential human trait: his knowledge of good and evil. He still was incapable of free decision and responsibility. But when man said "no" to God, he had gained the first condition for his self-awareness, for his capacity to choose. His disobedience was therefore his first step towards freedom, as has been said earlier (Fromm 1965:31,206; 1964:20; 1966:121-22).

Likewise, man's expulsion from Paradise (which, for Fromm, is a mythical expression of man's oneness with nature) marked the beginning of history. From then on man started to develop his human powers so as to attain a new and better harmony with the world as a fully developed individual (unlike the former in which he was not yet an individual). In this sense, man has to achieve his own salvation by himself; he has to give birth to himself so that at the "end of days" the new harmony, the new peace will be established.

The other concept of "messianic time" of which Fromm speaks is predominant in the Christian church. The latter claims that man can never absolve himself from the corruption he underwent as a result of Adam's disobedience. This being the case, only God, by an act of grace can save man. And He had saved him (man) by becoming human in the person of Christ (Fromm 1965:206). (It is far from the intention of this study to indulge in theological discourse. Whatever bearing this section has on theological matters should not be given too much weight, since Fromm does not speak of it as theologians do. The main point of reflection here is his philosophy of eschatology.)

Between the two aforementioned concepts of "messianic time," Fromm, by all indications, is more inclined towards the first. In fact, he himself admits that "in the name of reason and happiness, of human dignity and freedom, the messianic idea of salvation [the first one] finds new expression in Marx's thought, viz., the classless

society of justice; brotherliness and reason will be the beginning of a new world, toward the formation of which all previous history was moving" (Fromm 1965:207). God has no role in the historical process towards man's goal. He does not interfere in man's history by some so-called act of grace, nor would He change man's nature. God does not solve man's problem for him "except by revealing to him the aims of life" (Fromm 1963:205; 1966:88). The "messianic time" will come to pass (or will happen) only through man's own effort and not a state predetermined by either God, fate, or the stars.

In a different context, Fromm says that "God's role in history is restricted to sending messengers, the prophets, who (1) show man a spiritual goal, (2) show man the alternatives between which he has to choose, and (3) protest against all acts and attitudes through which man loses himself, and the path to salvation. Man is confronted with the choice between blessing and curse, life and death. It is God's hope that man will choose life, but God does not save him by an act of grace" (Fromm 1963:205). One should note, however, that Fromm's way of using the concept "God" here is nothing but mythical, or only symbolic of man's powers in seeking his goal in life. "God" is only an embodiment of the insights of great men regarding man's true goal in life (see ch. ii, sec. 5, *supra*).

Messianism, then, is the answer to the existence of man, in Fromm's thought. It is the meaning of man. It is not accidental to his existence but the inherent, logical answer to it—the alternative to his destruction (Fromm 1966:88-89). To put it in a different way, the "messianic time" is "the next step in history," not its "abolition." It is the time when man shall have been fully born; when he will be at home again in the world, after his expulsion from Paradise.

It is of interest to see how Fromm traces the apparent inevitability of man's messianic state of being. Man's dichotomy, says he, creates conflict and suffering, so he is driven to find ever new solutions to this conflict, until he has solved it by becoming fully human and achieving a new harmony with the world. This will be the "messianic time." Thus, this state is brought about by the force generated by man's existential dichotomy: being a part of nature and yet transcending the latter (as has been sketched in Chapter I). This means to say, then, that man's existential contradictions with



### *Alternative to A Dead God*

the force they generate in man's being will ultimately lead to the attainment of the messianic time; and not by some innate drive within man toward perfection, nor by an act of God (Fromm 1966:123-24).

Of added significance here is that Fromm's eschatological concept of history coincides with his philosophy of radical humanism in which he emphasizes "the oneness of the human race, the capacity of man to develop his own powers and to arrive at inner harmony and the establishment of a peaceful world" (Fromm 1966:13-14; 1964:83; [SH] 1966:vii). In other words, radical humanism considers the goal of man to be that of complete independence which does away with all fictions and illusions, and in which the use of force (which has made, and still makes, man to accept fiction for reality) will disappear. This state of complete independence will finally come when man will become one with his fellowmen, when he shall have perfected himself by his own efforts. By that time, his world shall have already become the messianic world.

This future messianic world, in Fromm's own analysis, has a dialectical relationship with the biblical "Eden." They are the same insofar as they are both a state of harmony. "Paradise is the golden age of the past," and the "messianic time" will be "the golden age of the future" (Fromm 1966:123). The difference lies in this: inasmuch as the first state of harmony existed only by virtue of "man's not yet having been born," the new state of harmony will exist as a result of "man's having been fully born" (Fromm 1966:123-24).

Fromm further states that the "messianic time" is the return to innocence and, at the same time, not a return at all, inasmuch as it is the goal towards which man strives after having lost his innocence. But the most significant dimension of the new "golden age" is "peace" (Fromm 1966:125-26). For man shall have already overcome the split that alienates him from his fellowmen and from nature. He will then be at peace with those from whom he was estranged. He will experience peace in his "at-one-ment" (Fromm 1966:126; 1963:212) with the world and with himself. Peace, in other words, will be the result of a change within man in which union has replaced "alienation." Thus, the idea of peace here is essentially bound up with the full realization of man's humanity.

### *Human Freedom and Historicity*

Furthermore, peace in this regard is more than not war. It is harmony and union between men, says Fromm; it is the final overcoming of separateness and human alienation (Fromm 1966:126). This means that peace between man and nature is harmony, or at-one-ment, between them. Man is no longer threatened by nature and stops striving to dominate it. He will become "natural" and nature will become "human." He and nature cease to be "opponents" and become one. In short, man is at home in the natural world, and nature becomes part of the human world.

In Fromm's mind, the idea of man's new harmony with nature in the "messianic time" signifies notably the end of the struggle of man against nature, and the latter also will not withhold itself from the former. Nature will become the all-loving, nurturing mother. "Nature within man will cease to be crippled and nature outside of man will cease to be sterile" (Fromm 1966:127).

To sum up, as soon as man can reach the "new golden age" through his own powers and growth of awareness, he will not only cease destroying his fellowmen. He will have as well overcome the experience of self-estrangement and separateness between one nation and another. Man shall have given full birth to himself and becomes fully human. The enemy ceases to be the stranger and becomes fully human. The illusion of essential differences between nation or the foe. The illusion of essential differences between nation and nation, and between man and man will ultimately vanish. There will be no longer "any chosen people" (Fromm 1966:129; this phrase illumines Fromm's deepest plight as a descendant of the Jewish race that has been anathematized in history), for peace between man and man will finally prevail. Harmony and "at-one-ment" will be considerably accomplished. And this experience of "at-one-ment with the world, with man, and with oneself," will triumphantly supersede and replace the enslaving, freedom-curtailing phenomenon of human alienation (Fromm 1963:212). For man shall have successfully returned to himself and have completely gained his selfhood. Lastly, man's love for man, his loving concern for everything human (as has been pointed out in Chapter II, sec. 6) will be established under the full expression of equal truth, security, freedom, and justice for all.

## **Conclusion**

Thus far goes Fromm's provoking analysis of modern man's plight in a society which he himself has instituted. He has shown that man still has time to make himself the master and the creator of the world and of himself, rather than the slave of his own historical concepts and social institutions or leaders of his own making. If human alienation is to vanish, man has to give full birth to his human powers and must eradicate all the conditions and illusions that have created it. Man's birth process will take some arduous, tormentous time, for the process of growth is very slow. But Fromm dares man to grow unrelentingly in self-awareness as this will finally culminate in the "messianic time" at which man's concern for man will ultimately resolve human self-estrangement.

Parenthetically, it is interesting to note that Fromm's philosophy of man has been consistent throughout. In brief, his reflection on man starts with the latter's thrown existence in the world as permeated with existential conflicts because of self-awareness. This paradoxical situation has created in man's being a need for transcendence or an object of devotion and orientation. However, man's attempt to transcend his dichotomous condition has led him to alienation. And alienation has led him to suffering, to selflessness. But suffering as a consequence of alienation enables man to grow in self-understanding and in freedom; and Fromm strongly believes that man's gradual growth in self-awareness in the historical process will finally culminate in the "golden age" of the future, at which man shall ultimately experience "at-one-ment" with himself, with his fellow men, and with the world.

Thus Fromm's thought is, to a large extent, unified and coherent. It will be worthwhile to follow him along this trend of thought in the following chapter which will be devoted primarily to a reflective, critical appreciation of his position on man's alienation in relation with God. The next chapter will also dwell on his relevant insights about man's unyielding search for existential meanings in the world with his fellowmen.



## Chapter V

### Conclusion

In the Introduction, the problem posed has been whether or not an affirmation of God will necessarily mean man's loss of selfhood and a threat to his freedom. This book has tried to resolve this problem by essaying that man affirms the reality of God as an **intelligible response** to his inner need for self-grounding and demand for intelligibility. To understand this as alienation or loss of self-identity seems to lie in the way or ways that man formulates his belief in God. With regard to the problem whether or not God is just a historically conditioned concept and a mere hypostatized subjective datum with no reality at all, this study has shown that the God-concept has, indeed, traditionally and historically undergone various formulations throughout the evolution of man, and that several of its historically conditioned conceptualizations have really caused human alienation.

#### Existential Decision

Reference has been made specifically to the formulations of Christian absolute theism. However, it has been also pointed out, in an honest deference to Fromm that in spite of the historically conditioned concepts of God, the open horizon of transcendence seems to go beyond any historical conditioning or any process of hypostatization. It seems to be always there. Man experiences this openness as beyond himself but whose presence "appeals" to him. It seems to be always "inviting" and "calling" upon man out of the contingency of his being. Man thus makes an **existential decision** and **response** to this openness disclosed by conscious experience and affirms "a self-communicating presence." His affirmation, though, is an experience in the order of faith. It is an experience of

### *Alternative to A Dead God*

an inevident reality which is both present and absent. This man calls the mystery of the reality of God. As has been stressed, this is one way by which man interprets religious experience.

On the other hand, this work has affirmed with Fromm that man himself did not ask to be. He has never been "consulted," so to speak, whether or not he wanted to be. He simply finds himself born and existing. He simply discovers himself "cast" or hurled in the world at an unchosen place and time, and later on he will be "thrown" out of it, again without his own choosing it. In his unasked-for thrownness, man realizes his being "the freak of nature" because only his is a life that is aware of itself. He is self-conscious. He feels the great burden of having been born human. Alone, helpless, homeless, and powerless, he has only one irrefutable certainty, that is, the certainty of his own absurdity: he is born and then he will die. It is an utter paradox, indeed.

Man thus gets bored, anxious, and discontented. Yet, he alone can say "I am"; he is an I, a person, and not a thing. That is why he is meaning-conscious: What really am I? Why am I who am?

That man feels the deepest need to overcome his paradoxical situation is not therefore untrue. He feels, as Fromm avers, the need for relatedness, rootedness, and transcendence. He realizes himself only by going beyond himself. That is to say, he feels the need for a sense of identity and security—the need for a frame of devotion and orientation. In fact, some men are willing to exchange their self-awareness and freedom for a good sound certainty. They have invented magic and have instituted orgies and rituals. Others have made "idols" out of trees, animals, and stones. They have created sacred institutions and have chosen leaders to rule them and whom they worship and adore as gods.

Further, they have created various kinds of religion in which they venerate gods, goddesses, or a God. In this way, man gains some feeling of security and some existential meaning. His magic, idol, leader, and his God provide him with some measure of identity and a feeling of individuality. For, as Fromm explains, man has already found at least some thing or power upon which he can rely as a frame of orientation or as an object of devotion.

All these indicate that man has interpreted life in the world in terms of his limited grasp of the real. Precisely because of this restricted understanding of reality, the phenomenon of human

### *Conclusion*

alienation has concomitantly emerged. In Fromm's explanation, man worships the works of his own hands; he deifies trees, animals, leaders and some unknown power (gods and spirits). Thus, he experiences himself no longer as the center of his world and the creator of himself, his actions and ideas, but as an "alien." He is out of touch with himself as well as with his fellowmen. In effect, he becomes a "robot" or an "automaton" as he can act only on behalf of his idols. And since he is so much concentrated on his God, man has become alienated not only from those who do not believe in the same God but also from others who do not believe in any God at all. It can be remarked, therefore, that God has, to some extent, become the barrier of universal love and goodwill among people. Peoples have become bitter enemies because of their religious beliefs.

### **Outgrowing Anthropomorphic Concepts**

The preceding considerations have been shown as the characteristics of Christian absolute theism which, according to Dewart and Fromm, has integrated in itself the supreme and omnipotent being of Greek metaphysics (q.v. ch. iv, sec. 6, *supra*). Christian absolute theism has given so much stress to the concepts of God that the latter has been conceived in many anthropomorphic forms. For example, God is known as an all-powerful Being to whose divine will human freedom must be subordinated. God is the all-wise King against whom man remains a slave; the Almighty, and man the most powerless. Moreover, man has so much absolutized his historically conditioned and particularized concepts of God that he consequently hates those who uphold different concepts of reality. He treats his fellowmen in terms of his own belief, and ascribes all events and human affairs, including man's destiny, to the will of God.

This being the case, it is not difficult to understand why Fromm has strongly demanded the **death of God** if only to restore the brotherhood of all men and to bring man back to himself. On this score, this book has expressed agreement with Fromm in his concern for the humanization of man and in his dogged protest against Christian absolute theism. Man must live rather than be lived. He must gain selfhood and must accept the burden of responsibility for himself and for all men. In this light, it has been suggested



with Dewart that man transcend his historically conditioned concepts of God as an omnipotent and eternal being. He should instead respond to him as a "self-communicating presence," and try to demonstrate this mysterious presence of God in terms of experience and action that promote common values, common responsibilities, and common social justice. In this way, the man-God intersubjectivity would perhaps cease to be a form of alienation (as Fromm observes it in Christian absolute theism). Rather, it would give man his full freedom and sense of responsibility to develop himself in history. He would no longer be dispossessed of himself but would acquire self-realization in his mutual presence with God in making history.

Thus, it becomes now apparent that the answer to the problem, "Does the reality of God stifle human freedom and create human alienation?", seems to lie in the very nature or the very concepts of God which man has formulated for himself. One cannot disagree with Fromm that the historically conditioned concepts of God in Christian absolute theism have, to a large extent, brought about human alienation. One cannot deny that dogmatic and anthropomorphic conceptualizations have alienated man from man. Too much stress on the truths of religion has been substituted for human attitude towards others. Unconsciously, in such a situation man has lost his "freedom from" as he already becomes a victim of "incestuous fixation." That is, man has become a prisoner of a closed system or of an absolute traditional dogmatism. He has surrendered his independence of mind to the absolute concepts of his religion. Insofar as he no longer acts or thinks except in terms of his closed theistic system, man has, in effect, also lost his "freedom to" judge and reason by himself and for himself in defense of his religion (q.v. ch. iii, sec. 2, *supra*).

It can be said, then, that Fromm's message provides the contemporary believer with some "catalytic force" which can help him to have a better grasp of his belief. His clarion cry is ominous: man has to "rehumanize" and "de-alienate" himself. Man must get out of his "incestuous fixation." He must be saved from his grim and reckless exploitation: "man's inhumanity to man," "the use of man by man," "the unconcern of man for man," and the "thingification" of man. He must be brought back to himself as truly human.

### Prisoner of a System

Inasmuch, therefore, as alienation is intimately bound up with man's restricted and particularized grasp of the real, some sort of reassessment, rethinking, or refashioning of theistic belief must be done. The relevance of Fromm's position is most felt in the urgent demand for the integration of belief with concrete situations in life. His concept of alienation regarding man's relation with God should remind the believer that man is usually inclined to form a comprehensive view of man and God on the basis of the limited perspectives which are at his disposal at a given period of growth in self-consciousness. Hence, the man-God relation needs to be reflected upon time and again.

Certainly, the force of traditional, historical concepts creates in man some sense of uneasiness to go beyond them. In fact, whenever he experiences certain points of skepticism about the views in which he has been traditionally oriented, man is inclined to suppress such doubt either because he feels apparently secure in such views or he does not want to be isolated or to antagonize his group. He does not want to be labeled subversive, rebel, non-conformist, or a communist. Many psychological bonds tie man to his culturally patterned belief. His closest peers and friends belong to it; and by giving up the group standpoints, man would estrange himself from them. In the Filipino experience, *iba talaga ang may pinagsamahan* (It really makes a difference if one's ties with someone have been bound by shared past experiences). In such a situation, one remains a prisoner of a system; one loses selfhood for he is being lived by the system and his acts are mere routines.

To a large extent, therefore, man is a prisoner of his own social system, political or religious. For this reason, a reflective reappraisal of belief will be difficult because one has so much dogmatized its definitive character and formulation that he has been permeated and conditioned by it personally, culturally, and existentially. Most often, a person thinks that his common tradition or group pattern of thinking cannot be wrong; and he feels it unreasonable, or even a mortal sin, to entertain any other belief which is usually viewed as false in the light of his own. All those who criticize his view are at fault and he thinks he is always right. What makes it even worse is for him to harbor indifferent attitude towards those who think and believe otherwise.



### *Alternative to A Dead God*

However, man's fidelity to understanding and to the real requires a corresponding integration between growth in self-awareness and the nature of belief. For if truth is the fidelity of consciousness to the real, then change or re-evaluation must be made in connection with the mind's coming-into-being. In other words, since man is a becoming, developing, and unfolding mode of being, one must constantly see in a new light things that in one way or another have always been seen. Man's belief and social frames must be reviewed and reformulated under the light of contemporary perspectives about man and his fellowmen who are living together in ever-changing situations. One must rid himself of obsolete and dead concepts of belief that hold him in inflexible frames, lest he become imprisoned in his own queer illusions and myths.

To be guided all the time by traditional categories about man and God is to be alienated indeed. It is to lose independence of thinking and to live in the power of tradition at whose mercy one shall always be; and worst of all, one shall become a mental prisoner or slave. Furthermore, religious convictions and cultural differences demand, more than ever, not only tolerance but openness to one another, respect and goodwill to each other, bearing in mind that men are living in various social situations. After all, as Fromm himself rightly observes, in spite of peoples' different theistic, racial, regional or ethnic distinctions, they are, first and foremost, human beings.

Man is indeed living in an age of severe stresses. His institutions have become incapable of meeting his needs. There is a growing dissatisfaction with the present order of things. In the Philippines, for instance, this ferment has been expressed in bank robberies, kidnappings for ransom, rape-slays, bombings, terrorisms, human atrocities and violations of human rights, political killings or assassinations, graft and corruption in all sectors, etc. By all indications, the Filipino is living in one of the "critical thresholds" of his growth in self-awareness. Contemporary man feels insecure because he is free, and feels uncertain because he has grown in self-awareness. Man has progressed to the point where he can see the limitations and alienation of his past grasp of meaning. He is thus in a crisis. But in this crisis there is danger as well as opportunity. Fromm's message of human alienation serves men (particularly the Filipino) a serious warning and an opportune time to integrate belief with actual experiences. "Those who believe in God," appeals

### *Conclusion*

Fromm, "should live their faith; those who do not should live the concepts of love and justice" (1965:306).

In this regard, the fact that human alienation has led men to a deep longing for humaneness deserves basic considerations. It is perhaps possible that with Dewart's suggestions for de-Hellenization would lie the renaissance of man's hope to be restored to himself, to his fellows and to the world. One cannot disagree with him and Fromm that historically conditioned and culturally patterned, particularized concepts of God (e.g., king, lord, master, or supreme, omnipotent, and eternal being) have not only estranged men from themselves. They have likewise created conditions that have led to inhuman atrocities, wars, abomination, intolerance, indifference, bitter recriminations and even violence among peoples all over the world.

For examples, there had been a time, also mentioned by Fromm, when those who deified the church (because of their own sincere convictions about man) were excommunicated, guillotined, and proclaimed enemies of religion, hence enemies of those who believed; when those who rebelled against inhuman treatment and religious hypocrisy (because of their honest concern for their fellowmen) were either ostracized, put to the gallows or martyred; when believers in different formulations of theism attacked one another on the pulpit.

### *God's Self-Communicating Presence*

Moreover, it can be remarked with Fromm that the historically conditioned doctrine of God has so much put stress on the salvation of the soul that the salvation of man here and now has, to a large extent, been neglected. Perhaps, the emphasis on the transcendence of God (i.e., his being an omnipotent, eternal, supra-personal King or Father in heaven; and man as being a helpless and poor sinner) has necessitated this approach to life. It has been shown that this concept of God has died in the limbo of obsolescence. As an alternative to a dead God, it has been strongly suggested with Dewart to shift emphasis to the presence of God with man in the world; to stress God's "self-communicating presence" in the world as an incarnate dimension of his infinitude, eternity, omniscience, and omnipotence.



### *Alternative to A Dead God*

For illustrations, one should experience God's presence in the self-sufficiency of every Filipino: physical subsistence and social security, or if you will, three square meals a day, clothes, a house, and a sufficient salary to make a living. Thus, under a theism recast and attuned to contemporary situations, Christ being the way means more social work, the truth more honesty, efficiency in government, and social justice, and the life more food, housing projects, and more respect for human dignity. In the absence of these essentials of a meaningful life, the contemporary Filipino cannot perhaps understand believers who talk about God save as an object of Sunday worship, hence, his indifference to the God-problem.

By the same token, it can also be interpreted that God's self-communicating presence permeates our struggle for excellence in our own jobs or professions, whether we are teachers, doctors, lawyers, CPA's, engineers, politicians, janitors, secretaries, farmers, or administrators. By striving to be efficient, honest, and proficient in our own fields of activity, by becoming the best of whatever we are, we are also participating in God's creative act. In this manner, we become God's dynamic partners in creation.

For Fr. Karl Rahner, we must see the invisible God in our visible brothers (n. 2, n.d.). To conceive of God as a transcendent, divine, supreme being and to look for him in churches or altars would be to become unrealistic daydreamers. But to look for him among ourselves, in our associates, colleagues, co-workers, officemates, employers and employees with open love, care, and understanding is really to acknowledge him as a personal God.

Through our respect and concern for everybody's well-being and socio-economic development, we perceive God's all-encompassing goodness; whereas deceit, religious hypocrisy, human atrocities, professional jealousy, "crab mentality," election fraud and terrorism, graft and corruption, sexual or political harassment and oppression are spasmodic symptoms of God's thirst for the Filipino's love for his fellowmen. In our present society, for instance, which is characterized by a culture of violence and infested with corrupt public officials, we can say God is thirsty (uhaw ang Diyos). Sapagkat ano pa kaya ang tunay na palatandaan ng kadakilaan ng Diyos kundi ang pagkilala ng tao sa kanyang kapwa? (What is the best proof of God's supreme goodness if not the recognition of man by man?).

### **God-for-Man, Not Against Man**

*Conclusion*

In like manner, to experience God's visibility, one should experience him in the smiles of people, in their humane relationships, in their sharing problems with one another, in their helping students understand classroom lectures, in their respect for other people's rights, in their helping others live a creative life, and even in their concern for a clean environment and preservation of forest reserves. In this way, we are building the human, according to R.O. Johann ((1968). We are humanizing and personalizing God rather than divinizing him. God, after all, is with us, not above us. God-for-us, not against us. God-for-man, God-with-man. God does not want man to become a worshipper of gods or idols but a partner in creating man himself and the world.

In Dietrich Bonhoeffer's interpretation, we must see the suffering of Christ in the sufferings of people in the world (1962:222-23,226). Christian believers must integrate belief with the concrete living experiences of the Filipino; for Christ is not to be met in some special place alone (chapel or cathedral) but also in the concreteness of everyday living, in our loving concern for our fellowmen, irrespective of creed or color.

For example, those who teach others about Christ's humble origin should lead them to the slum areas so that they will see for themselves the existential meaning of what actually is meant by being born in a stable, in a dilapidated shack of dirty dogs, cats, and rats. To explain that Christ was the son of a poor carpenter, one should confront himself with the subhuman living conditions of the undernourished, boil-infested young children (whose pathetic existence and accidental birth they did not ask for) in a barong-barong (shanty).

To teach that Joseph was the foster father of Jesus, one has to visit Boy's Town and other orphanages in the country. To better understand the meaning of crucifixion, one must view for himself not only the impoverished and the sick who are suffering from all kinds of diseases (especially those who cannot afford to buy medicines and to be confined in hospitals), but also the emaciated, delirious inmates at the Mental Hospital in Mandaluyong and the lepers in Culion. One must likewise empathize with the harrowing experience suffered and excruciating grief felt

### *Alternative to A Dead God*

by fellow Filipinos whose loving husbands or wives, brothers or sisters were helpless victims of grim and harsh inhumanity, social injustice, ruthlessness, and brutality beyond compare.

### **God of Human Liberation**

Within the context of a theology of revolution, the foregoing reflections can be taken to mean that the **real meaning of God is man**. Not that man is God, but in the sense that God is the salvation of man. In Martin Buber's explanation, we must see God in, not above, the world (1952). We come face to face with Him when meeting with people, when attending to their basic needs. We must look for God personally, says Fr. Bulatao somewhere in his writings, not in abstract doctrines as those being discussed in theology classes, but in people—in you and me, when we help one another grow as human beings.

In this connection, it can be recalled that the Israelites believed in the God of Moses precisely because he proved to them that God is the God of liberation: freedom from bondage and exploitation in Egypt; freedom from insecurity, hunger, thirst, and diseases in the wilderness. Filipinos today demand the same God: the God of emancipation from poverty, from the culture of terrorism, violence, graft and corruption, and from the culture of cheating, fraud, inefficiency, and dishonesty.

One might ask: Would this not make us less Christian? To requote Bonhoeffer's laudable perception: "To be a Christian does not mean to be religious in a particular way or to cultivate some form of asceticism but to be man" (q.v., *supra*). In other words, what makes a Christian worthy of his name is participation in the sufferings of God in the life of the world. To be a Christian is to be actively involved in solving the problems of man: war and violence, election frauds and massacres, political assassinations, social inequities and atrocities, military abuses, tortures and rub-outs, sexual harassment and exploitation, and the suppression of human rights to live well and love well.

Likewise, to be religious does not necessarily mean to hear Mass and receive holy communion every Sunday, but to help everybody love everybody. Perhaps, among so many pious and religious acts one can perform today would be to be able to make the Mainland

### *Conclusion*

Chinese love the Taiwanese, a Kuwaiti love an Iraqi, a Bosnian love a Serb, and the NPA love the AFP. Reverence to God may be also expressed in our utmost concern for a clean environment, rivers and seas, and our care for our forests and mountains; whereas polluting the air, the rivers, and the seas should be regarded as gross disrespect and irreverence to the author of the ecosystem, who is God himself. Anyone who can successfully promote world peace, goodwill, and brotherhood among all men must be glorified and declared a great saint without any need for encyclical canonization.

In the light of the foregoing, one can perhaps better understand God's essential attributes not as God really is but as they are expressed or made manifest in man's concern for man, in his love and care for others regardless of their religious convictions. Perhaps, one can interpret his authentic involvement in the world with his fellowmen as one way of sharing in God's eternal and omnipotent wisdom. Thus, in such a situation, a believer cannot be said to be necessarily alienated either from himself or from his fellowmen. Rather, through one's self-creation and productive activity, one would experience and feel the presence of a living God.

Admittedly, life today "is precarious and unpredictable, and the only way to live it is to make every effort to save it as long as there is a possibility of doing so" (Fromm 1968:147). One can hope there is, and this possibility lies in man, in oneself—through one's concern for, and service to, his fellowmen here and now in dialogue with a living (not dead) God. In this way, an individual is, in effect, giving birth to himself anew, as Fromm contends. He is accepting the responsible act of commitment to the world of man. He shall be starting a new history of "harmony and union," in which social justice, concern for others, love and peace between man and man, between nation and nation will ultimately prevail. Likewise, man would thereby be creating a new world where he shall later experience true freedom, security, and justice; where all men shall experience "at-one-ment" with themselves and with others through their incarnate or "enfleshed" encounter with the living God of freedom and progress. One can trust that it will then be the end of human alienation, the return of man to himself, to the world and to his fellows.



### **Postscript: Great Revolutionary Leader**

There was once a man who, for the sake of his fellowmen, could not bear to become a slave to a traditional system. This man lived at a very sad state of his own social world (like our own today) when those who wanted to be good were either threatened or tortured; when those who chose to be honest were either coerced, harassed or bribed; and when those who abused power to exploit others were glorified and further given society's leadership-status.

Undaunted by the ominous threats aired against his life by the powerful oligarchs and influential religious authorities during his time, this man vehemently smashed the yoke of tradition that had long permeated the lives of his fellowmen. This man succeeded in his mission because the edifying life that he had lived made the people realize that **the real meaning of God is man**. Thus, he became the greatest revolutionary leader that the Christian world has ever had. That great man was Jesus of Nazareth (Timbreza 1984:14-15, 19-21).

The Four Gospels of the New Testament tell us that at a young age, about 30 years old, Jesus began to attack the abuses and social injustices committed against his fellowmen. He fought the god of tradition that had long permeated the lives of peoples. He assailed the social order that perpetrated abuse of influence and power. He worked hard and long for the awakening of all men, regardless of race, culture, and doctrine.

Jesus taught that no social force could determine man; that man could liberate himself from the forces of history, politics, and traditional orientation. No economic forces, no class distinctions, no social structures or nations could completely enslave him, although these may condition his thoughts and actions. Furthermore, Jesus challenged man to fight the gods of oracles, magic, horoscope, and fatalism. He urged man to become the creator rather than the victim of socio-political transformations. He dared man to become himself by losing himself, i.e., by losing the self conditioned by culture, custom, religion, and tradition, so that he can assert and affirm himself as fully human.

He rebuked the religious hierarchy then which had turned religion into a mere institution, making man an enemy to man. Thus, he protested against the tyranny of traditional forces that

had created conditions for inhumanity to man, dehumanization, and alienation which, in turn, had closed man's eyes to the kingdom of human salvation.

Committed to the gospel of the kingdom, the great Nazarene threatened to destroy the "temple of Jerusalem" when the vicious, cynics, skeptics, mercenaries, and hypocrites mocked at the "house of his Father." He dedicated his time and energy to the underprivileged, disadvantaged, and downtrodden; he devoted his days and nights to the poor victims of injustice, the meek and honest, the lowly and indigent. Most of all, he sacrificed his life so that others may live and be saved.

Together with his *mga kasama* (companions), followers, and friends, Jesus staged a "march rally" on Palm Sunday against quasi-religious beliefs, corruption, and social anomalies, starting from the Mount of Olives down to the crowded streets of Jerusalem. He conducted "teach-ins" among a mammoth crowd coming from such towns and places as Syria, Galilee, Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, Gennesaret, Gandarenes, Tyre, Sydon, Jericho, Bethany, Bethpage, and Jordan—telling all men and women that "God is not the God of the dead but of the living," the God of freedom, not enslavement; the God of progress, not corruption.

In the desert and mountains of Galilee, Jesus starved with a great multitude discussing the "gospel of the kingdom." He lived with the dumb, lame, and the blind not because he did not love the rich but because he wanted to set an example to all men. He fed the needy and healed the sick not because he wanted to gain prestige, popularity, and admiration but because he wanted all men to understand that the real message is human salvation, not starvation, corruption, or exploitation.

He mingled with the oppressed and unfortunate, not because he wanted to be praised or glorified but because he wanted to convey the real meaning of mutual trust and goodwill to others. He worked with the depressed, exploited, distressed, and dispossessed, not because he wanted them to depend upon himself but because he would like all men to stand firm on their feet against socio-political forces that tend to perpetuate poverty, deceit, graft, abuse of power, injustice, and heinous crimes. Thus, in words and deeds, Jesus proved to the world-of-man that God is—God of the living, not of the dead. God is man's salvation, redemption and

### Alternative to A Dead God

self-liberation. God is a social worker, a community physician, and a generous feeder. God is human development, socio-economic progress, international relations among nations all over the world.

Taken and lived as such, belief in God is likewise belief in man, in ourselves, in the Filipino. Concern for others is also concern for God. Ang pag-ibig sa tao ay siyang pag-ibig din sa Diyos (Love for man is love of God). Through others, God speaks to me. In this way, to talk about God is to talk about man. To discuss the meaning of God is to explain the meaning of man. And it is only when we truly live among ourselves the real meaning of God to man that we can gain self-fulfillment and self-realization. Only then can we become true Christians. Only then can we become truly human.

### Bibliography

- Altizer, Thomas J.J. and Hamilton, William. 1968. *Radical Theology and the Death of God*. Great Britain: Pelican Books.
- Augustine, St. 1959. *The Confessions of St. Augustine*. Trans. by E.G. Sheed. New York: Sheed and Ward, Inc.
- Barth, Karl. 1967. *The Humanity of God*. London: Fontana Library.
- Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. 1962. *Letters and Papers from Prison*. New York: MacMillan Paperbacks.
- Buber, Martin. 1957. *I and Thou*. English translation by R.G. Smith. New York: T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh and Scribner.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1965. *The Knowledge of Man*. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1952. *The Eclipse of God*. New York: Harper & Brothers.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1947. *Between Man and Man*. London: Collins Clear-Type Press.
- Bulatao, Jaime & Gorospe, Vitaliano. 1966. *Split-Level Christianity and the Christian Renewal of Filipino Values*. Quezon City: Ateneo University Press.
- Bultman, Rudolf. 1965. *Translating Theology into Modern Age*. New York: Harper Torchbook.
- Dewart, Leslie. 1966. *The Future of Belief: Theism in a World Come of Age*. New York: Herder & Herder.
- Dondeyne, Albert. 1964. *Faith and the World*. Dublin: Gill & Son.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1958. *Contemporary European Thought and Christian Faith*. New York: Duquesne University Press.
- Evans, Richard I. 1966. *Dialogue with Erich Fromm*. New York: Harper & Row, Publishers.
- Farrell, Brian A., ed. 1994. *Philosophy and Psychoanalysis*. New York: Macmillan College Publishing Company.
- Finance, Joseph de. 1964. *Notes on Ontology*. Excerpts from the Introduction. The First Three Chapters. Trans. by Fr. Roque Ferriols, S.J. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Publications Office.
- Friedman, Maurice. 1967. "Erich Fromm and Self-Realization." In *To Deny Nothingness: Contemporary Images of Man*. New York: Delacorte Press.



## Bibliography

- Fromm, Erich. 1942. *The Fear of Freedom*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1956. *The Art of Loving*. Vol. IX of *World Perspectives*. Planned and edited by R.N. Anshen. 9 vols. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1961. *Marx's Concept of Man*. With a translation of Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts by T.B. Bottomore. Milestones of Thoughts in the History of Ideas. New York: Frederick Unger Publishing Co.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1961. *May Man Prevail?: An Inquiry into the Facts and Fictions of Foreign Policy*. New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc.
- \_\_\_\_\_, and Josephson, Mary. eds. 1962. *Man Alone: Alienation in Modern Society*. New York: Dell Publishing Co., Inc.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1962. *Beyond the Chains of Illusions*. A volume in the Credo Perspectives Series. Planned and edited by Ruth Nanda Anshen. U.S.A.: Simon and Schuster, Inc.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1963. *The Dogma of Christ and Other Essays on Religion, Psychology and Culture*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1964. *The Heart of Man: Its Genius and Evil*. Vol. XII of *Religious Perspectives*. Planned and edited by R.N. Anshen. 12 vols. New York: Harper and Row, Inc.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1965. *The Sane Society*. Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, Inc.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1966. *You Shall be as Gods: A Radical Interpretation of the Old Testament and its Tradition*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- \_\_\_\_\_, ed. (SH) 1966. *Socialist Humanism*. An International Symposium on the Problems of Humanist Socialism. Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Co., Inc.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (MH) 1967. *Man for Himself: An Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics*. Greenwich, Conn.: Fawcett Publications, Inc.
- \_\_\_\_\_. (PR) 1967. *Psychoanalysis and Religion*. New York: Yale University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1968. *The Revolution of Hope: Toward a Humanized Technology*. New York: Bantam Books, Inc.

## Bibliography

- \_\_\_\_\_. 1969. "On the Common Struggle against Idolatry." *The Catholic World*. Vol. 208 (January).
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1976. *To Have or To Be?* New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1986. *For the Love of Life*. Trans. from the German by Robert and Rita Kimber. Edited by Hans Jurgen Schultz. New York: The Free Press.
- Garaudy, Robert and Lauer, Quintin. 1968. *A Christian-Communist Dialogue*. New York: Doubleday Co., Inc.
- Jaspers, Karl. 1964. *Way to Wisdom: An Introduction to Philosophy*. Trans. by Ralph Manheim. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Johann, Robert. 1966. *The Pragmatic Meaning of God*. Milwaukee: Marquette University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1968. *Building the Human*. New York: Herder & Herder.
- Luijpen, William. 1960. *Existential Phenomenology*. Pittsburgh, Pa.: Duquesne University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1966. *Phenomenology and Humanism*. Pittsburgh, Pa.: Duquesne University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1969. *Existential Phenomenology*. Revised Edition. Pittsburgh, Pa.: Duquesne University Press.
- McCarthy, Donald. 1966. "Marcel's Absolute Thou." *Philosophy Today*, X (No. 3/4).
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1956. *The Genealogy of Morals*. Trans. by Francis Golffing. Garden City, New York: Doubleday Anchor Books.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1961. *Thus Spake Zarathustra*. Trans. by R.J. Hollingdale. Baltimore: Penguins Books.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1974. *The Gay Science*. Trans. by Walter Kaufmann. New York: Vintage Books.
- Quito, Emerita S. 1971. "Reflections on the Death of God." *UNITAS*, XLVI, No. 2 (June).
- Rahner, Karl. n.d. "The Unity of God and Love of Neighbor." *Theology Digest*. XV (No.2).
- Robinson, John. 1963. *Honest to God*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1965. *The New Reformation?* London: SCM Press Ltd.

## Bibliography

- Steeman, Theodore M. 1968. "What is Wrong with God?" *The Sacred and the Secular*. Ed. by Michael Taylor. New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc.
- Timbreza, Florentino T. 1984. "A Second Look at the Filipino Concept of God." *Sophia*. Journal of Philosophy. Vol. XIV, No. 1 (May-August).
- The Christian Bible*
- Vahanian, Colin. 1967. *The Death of God*. New York: George Braziller.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1966. *No Other God*. New York: George Braziller.
- Van Croonenburg, Engelbert J. 1968. "Man and the Absolute Thou." *Selected Readings in Philosophy*. Compiled by Fr. Jose A. Cruz, S.J. Quezon City: Ateneo de Manila Publications Office.

## Index

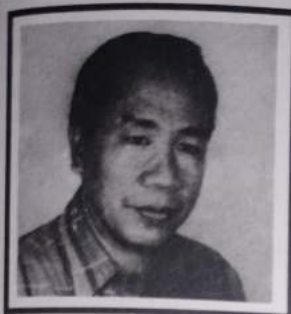
### A

- Abnormality, 3
- Abomination, 109
- Absoluteness, 9
- The Absolute, 68-69, 76
- Absolute Thou, 74, 79
- Absolutes, 10
- Absolutism, 54
- Abstractions, 21, 49
- Absurdity, 4
- Actions, 49
- Adam (Biblical character), 56, 62
  - disobedience, 62
- Affirmation of God, xv
- AFP, 113
- Age, 74
- Alcoholic abuse, 47
- Alienation, xiv-xvi,
  - Search under Human alienation
  - phenomenon of, xviii
- Allah, 33
- Alternatives, Contradictory, 53
- Alternativism, 51, 54
- Anguish, 69, 85
- Animal
  - and nature, 1
  - attributes, 1
  - evolution, 2
  - existence, 2
- Animal worship, 10
- Anomalies, Social, 115
- Anomie, 15
- Anshen, Ruth Nanda, xviii
- Answers, Alternative, 53
- Anthropomorphisms, 93, 102
- Anxiety, 10, 16, 34, 85
- The Art of Loving*, 32
- Asceticism, 90, 112
- Assassinations, 108, 112
- At-one-ment, 64-65, 113
- Atheism, 34, 98
- Atrocities, 103, 108, 110, 112
- Attitudes, 48, 50, 99
  - Apathetic, 48
  - Humanistic, realistic, 34
- Augustine, Sr., 51
- Authority, 47
- Authority, External, 20
  - church, 20
  - leaders, 20
  - parents, 20
  - public opinion, 20
  - state, 20
- Authority, Internalized External, 20
- Authority, Spiritual, 55
- Automatons, 21, 105
- Autonomy, 81
- Awareness, 44, 51, 54, 56

### B

- Bachofen, xvii
- Bank robberies, 108
- Barong-barong*, 111
- Barth, Karl, 89





## The Author

Dr. Florentino T. Timbreza is a Full Professor of Philosophy, holder of the Bro. Lucian Athanasius Distinguished Professorial Chair in Philosophy and Letters, and a University Fellow at De La Salle University-Manila.

His major works include *Pilosopiyang Pilipino* (1982), *Mga Hugis ng Kaisipang Pilipino* (1989), *Logic Made Simple for Filipinos* (1992), *Bioethics and Moral Decisions* (1993), *Ensayklopidiya ng Pilosopiya* (co-author, 1993), *Pro-Life and Pro-Choice Views of Contraception and Abortion* (monograph, 1994), *Ang Tao Te Ching ni Lao Tzu sa Filipino* (1999), *Intelektwalisasyon ng Pilosopiyang Filipino* (1999), and *Quest for Meaning: Philosophy Made Easy for Filipinos* (2000).

Dr. Timbreza has likewise published numerous articles and essays unfolding Filipino thoughts and values.